

JUDGES 6:25-32
DEDICATION OF GIDEON!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Judges chapter 6 as we continue our in-depth study of the book of Judges.

And yes, it is a dark book. We see the children of Israel, over and over again, going back into sin, turning from the Lord, worshipping the false gods of the pagan nations around them.

But I hope you are also seeing that God is loving, He is forgiving, and His desire is not to destroy Israel, but to restore them!

Make no mistake about it, you see this over and over again in the Bible, that God is in the business of restoration.

Now, in saying that, what does that tell you about God?

It tells me that our God is a God who loves sinful man so much. Can you imagine if you were God and your creation did the things that we read of in the Bible to you, how would you respond?

I don't think I need to hear that answer because I know what I would do, I would destroy them!

Think about it. Someone cuts in front of you when you are driving, how do you feel? Again, you don't have to tell me, I know what I would do. I would not be happy, and I will leave it at that.

And yet, when it comes to God, His love extends so far, and it is so deep that there is no sin you could ever imagine than is stronger than His love for you!

And we see that here with the children of Israel.

Here in Judges chapter 6 we see another time when they turned from the Lord and suffered the consequences of their rebellion against God. Again, not because God hated them, but He loved them too much to allow them to stay in that condition. He was doing this for their own good.

What did He do? Listen to what we are told in Judges 6:1-6, **“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains. So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.”**

For seven years the Midianites took the sustenance of Israel for themselves, as they took their food or grain, sheep, ox and donkeys.

And as they finally cry out to God, the Lord sends a man by the name of Gideon to Judge Israel and deliver them from this bondage that they were in at the hands of the Midianites.

And I love the calling of Gideon. The Lord said to him, **“... ‘The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!’”** Judges 6:12.

Again, this is funny to me because when I look at Gideon, I don't see him as a mighty man of valor!

You see, he is in the winepress trying to thresh his wheat, and you don't thresh wheat in a winepress, which was lower than where you would thresh wheat and not much wind to catch.

You would thresh the wheat on the mountain or higher place to catch the wind.

But, because of fear that the Midianites would see him and steal his wheat, there he is in the winepress threshing his wheat and the Lord tells him, “**... ‘The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!’**” Judges 6:12.

And Gideon himself realized that he was not a mighty man of valor and he tells the Lord that very thing. He said, “**... ‘O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.’ ... ‘O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.’**” Judges 6:13, 15.

First of all he blames God for all that has happened to them and then he tells the Lord that he can't do it, he has no strength, in fact, he said, “**I am the least in my father’s house.**”

And out of that we see the Lord remind Gideon, “**... ‘Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.’**”

It is after this we see Gideon worship the Lord and it is out of this worship of the Lord that we are going to see the ***DEDICATION OF GIDEON!*** We will see him go forward as the Lord has told him, even though there are still some doubts on Gideon's part.

But look at how we ended last time, because it will lead us to what we will be looking at this morning.

We read in Judges 6:23-24, “**Then the Lord said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’ So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.**”

God replaced the fear that Gideon had over this calling with His peace and it is out of that relationship Gideon has with God that we see him serve the Lord!

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning down into four main points. They are:

THE WORK OF GOD – JUDGES 6:25-26

GIDEON TAKES A STAND – JUDGES 6:27

THE ENEMY RISES UP – JUDGES 6:28-30

THE FAITH OF GIDEON IS CAUGHT – JUDGES 6:31-32

So with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 6, beginning in verse 25 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at the – ***DEDICATION OF GIDEON!***

JUDGES 6

VERSES 25-26

Here we see God call Gideon to a work. Talk about a challenging day. Not only did God call Gideon to defeat the Midianites, but now he was to cut down the idol that was in town, an idol that his father set up and is worshipping!

Did they worship the true and living God? I think they were but alongside the worship of the true and living God was this altar of Baal, and this idol of Asherah. And this god Asherah was worshiped with all kinds of vile practices.

And as you look at this, I think that there is a picture or pattern emerging. You see, before Gideon could deliver Israel, he had to get his own house in order. He needed to destroy the idols, the altar of Baal and this wooden image of Asherah!

Folk's, I think that is a good principle for us to follow. I think the Lord wants us to take care of those things in our own family before ministry.

You see, how are you going to take care the family of God if you can't take care of your own family?

We see this with Moses. God called Moses to deliver his people, the children of Israel, from their bondage in Egypt.

And yet, we read in Exodus 4:24-26, **“And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, ‘Surely you are a husband of blood to me!’ So He let him go. Then she said, ‘You are a husband of blood!’ - because of the circumcision.”**

Now that is interesting. God called Moses to deliver the children of Israel and then the Lord sought to kill him. What is up with that?

And as you read this, doesn't it seem rather strange? It does to me and yet, this was very important.

You see, Moses was to be God's instrument to deliver His people, to bring them the Law of God and yet, he did not circumcise one of his sons, probably the youngest.

I believe that Gershom his firstborn was circumcised but when Eliezer was born his wife Zipporah refused to let him be circumcised and Moses did nothing about it.

But now, as they begin to travel to Egypt God is going to kill Moses and he must have been very sick because Zipporah recognizes what is going on and why, and she goes and gets a sharp stone and circumcises Eliezer – OUCH!

Why was God so angry?

Because in Genesis 17:10-14 God told Abraham, **“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”**

Moses was to represent God before the people, and he is already compromising what God has said. For Moses, before he could deliver his people, he had to correct his error and be the spiritual leader in his family even if his wife didn't agree!

And we even see this principle of obeying God before any ministry, in fact, your family is your ministry.

Let me show you what I mean. In Ephesians chapter 5 Paul speaks of the marriage relationship. He says that wives are to submit to their own husbands as they would unto the Lord.

And he says that it is a picture of the Church who submits to the Lord, her actions are a picture of that relationship.

Then Paul speaks to the husbands and he tells them that they are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. In other words, husbands are to lay their lives down for their wives, sacrificially.

Not only that, he is also to help her grow in the Lord and allow the Word of God to cleanse their lives, remove any dirt that may come upon them.

And this is how Paul sums up that section. He tells us in Ephesians 5:30-33, **“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”**

Like I have said. We see here that Paul is showing us that the Christian marriage is a picture; it is a type of Christ and His Church.

The man being a type of Christ, the woman representing the Church.

And thus, as the unsaved look at our marriages, they should be drawn to Christ.

They should see something vastly different in our marriages than they see in this world!

Think about marriage today, for many. They will stick it out until their needs are no longer met and then they will move on to the next person, and the next person, and the next person!

But for us as Christians, it is that **AGAPE** love that fills our lives and ministers to our spouse! And that is what the world should see, and it should open a door for us to speak of Christ!

Listen again to what D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said regarding Christ and the church. We are told,

Woman was made at the beginning as the result of an operation which God performed upon man. How does the church come into being? As the result of an operation which God performed on the Second Man, His only begotten, beloved Son on Calvary's hill. A deep sleep fell upon Adam. A deep sleep fell upon the Son of God, He gave up the ghost, He expired, and there in that operation the church was taken out. As the woman was taken out of Adam, so the church is taken out of Christ. The woman was taken out of the side of Adam; and it is from the Lord's bleeding, wounded side that the church comes.

- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

A beautiful picture.

And thus, this is a ministry you might say because as people look at a Christian marriage, they should see something that is beautiful and they both meet the needs of the other person.

If you don't have this down, then other ministries are out. In fact, you can look at the qualifications for pastors, elders, deacons and really for all of us, "**(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)**" I Timothy 3:5.

Before Gideon could defeat the Midianites, he would have to take care the situation in his own home and really, his own community!

And think about this situation here. Gideon's dad, probably his family, his friends, the community were worshiping these false gods.

And God tells Gideon that he has to cut down this image, destroy this pagan altar and set up an altar to God and offer a burnt sacrifice on it.

Do you think anyone would notice if he did that?

You bet they would!

Now let's look at this another way.

You have come to Christ. The old things have passed away, all things are new. And when you came to Christ didn't you have to cut down, destroy some of those things you did before you were saved?

Of course you did!

Maybe you were into drugs and your friends, of course, were into drugs as well. Now that you have come to Christ and have been delivered from that lifestyle, you have to cut off those ties with those close friends you had that were doing drugs.

Now I know some will wonder how they will come to Christ if you walk away from them. Let me say this. If you hang around them, you will find yourself back into doing drugs. You must be wise.

Look at the progression here in Psalm 1 and you will see what I mean. We are told, **“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”** Psalm 1:1-6.

Notice who this blessed man is. He is the one who does not follow down this destructive path. And it is a destructive path that takes you down farther and farther, away from God, away from the blessedness that God has for you!

And as you look at this you see a gradual progression of this person who is sinking deeper into this pattern of sin.

Notice that at first, they are walking with the ungodly. He is just kind of being with them, starting out as just a casual relationship with them.

But then he is not only walking with them, he is standing with them, they are hanging out together. No longer is it a casual influence upon his life.

And finally, he is sitting with them, in fellowship with them, agreeing in their sin and mocking the things of God!

How many people travel down this road that leads to destruction as Solomon reminds us in Proverbs 14:12, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”**

It is a wakeup call for people to not go down that path that leads to death!

Again, you have come out of that lifestyle, don't go back to it and as you hang around those that do, they will pull you back down. Be careful.

And it may not be drugs, but you know the things that you did before you were saved and now you don't do them any longer. Don't go back to them.

Paul, in I Corinthians 6:11 put it like this, as he speaks of the lifestyle we came out of and where we are now at. He wrote, **“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“And such some of you were [once]. But you were washed clean (purified by a complete atonement for sin and made free from the guilt of sin), and you were consecrated (set apart, hallowed), and you were justified [pronounced righteous, by trusting] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the [Holy] Spirit of our God.”**

And The Living Bible says of this verse, **“There was a time when some of you were just like that but now your sins are washed away, and you are set apart for God; and he has accepted you because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God have done for you.”**

I want you to clearly see what God has done in you and admonish you not to go back to the old lifestyle that had you in bondage. If the Son has set you free, why go back to the old ways.

Put that old life behind and walk ahead in the new life that Christ has given to you!

That is what we see with Gideon. His family was involved in idol worship and I would think he was no different until God got a hold of his life and turned him around.

Now he has come to God and that love for God will be manifested in the things that he does. He is going to cut down those idols, remove them from his life and from his family and from his community!

Sometimes taking a stand for what we believe in is hard. But we see here ***THE WORK OF GOD*** as God calls Gideon.

And from here we will look at what is manifested in the life of Gideon – ***GIDEON TAKES A STAND!***

VERSE 27

Now as some read this, they see a lack of faith on Gideon's part.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Gideon decided to obey the Lord at night when the village was asleep. This showed his fear (Judg. 6:27); he wasn't sure God could or would see him through.

“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40 NKJV).

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid” (Isaiah 12:2 NKJV).

After all the encouragements God had given him, Gideon's faith should have been strong, but before we judge him, we'd better look at ourselves and see how much we trust the Lord.

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, p. 442

Yes, he did this task at night and he took ten men with him, but I don't think that means he lacked faith. Was he nervous about doing this? Yes, he was. What about being fearful, was Gideon fearful? Yes, he was. In fact, because of this fear of his father and the people in his community, the men of the city, he did this task at night! But there is more to it than just that.

Let's think this through a minute. Yes, Gideon was fearful, but that fear did not stop him from doing what God called him to do. That tells me he was looking for God to give him this victory. That is a good thing. Fear didn't stop him it just helped him to get refocused.

Secondly, these ten men that he got to help him, was not a lack of faith. You see, cutting down this wooden image, destroying this altar to Baal was a huge task and he needed help.

And the third point that shows me that he didn't lack faith is when he went to accomplish this task. Yes, it says that he came at night because he was fearful. But I think we need to cut him some slack here. Think about what was going on during the day as the people were worshiping Baal. They would have to get through the crowd and while they are worshiping this image, this crowd of people, they would then have to try and destroy it. Not an easy task and thus, he goes at night and does what God called him to do while the people were sleeping.

He did obey the Lord and he destroyed this pagan worship site!

Let me illustrate this kind of faith like this and I think you will see what I mean. We are told,

There is an easy, practical way to have faith. A minister said to an evangelist who was holding services in his church: "I have no faith in this matter, but I see it in the Word of God and I am going to act on God's Word, no matter how I feel."

And the evangelist replied, "Why, that is faith!"

The Word of God is the secret of faith. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

We do not attain or achieve faith; we simply receive it as we read God’s Word. . . . Many a child of God is failing to enjoy God’s richest blessings in Christ because he fails to receive the gift of faith. He looks within himself for some quality that will enable him to believe, instead of “looking unto Jesus” who is “the author and finisher of our faith.”

“If our faith were but more simple, we would take Him at His word.”

- Sunday School Times

Really, that is all that Gideon had to go on, the Word of God as God spoke to him – “. . .
‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’”

And Gideon received the Word of God into his life and built an altar to worship the God who had given him peace in the battle he was about to face, and the altar he called – “***The-LORD-Shalom.***”

But these walks of faith can be difficult. Let me explain.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Those words seem simple enough.

However, I am learning that fleshing out those words, that simple concept, can be a much tougher assignment. It requires tremendous courage and strength. You must be willing to be misunderstood and even abandoned. You must be willing to give up any semblance of control of your life that you thought you might have. You must be willing to look like a complete fool.

But it is a journey of tremendous blessing and reward. It is a journey that is exciting, life-altering, and mind-boggling. It is a journey that will allow you to see and experience God as he was meant to be: in all his fullness and grace.

Walking by faith and not by sight requires you to go to a place you do not know, one that God will reveal as you walk in obedience. Just look to Abraham as an example (Genesis 12:1).

Walking by faith means that you continue to cling to the dreams God has planted in your heart, even when you've been thrown away, taken to prison for crimes you didn't commit. Just look at all Joseph endured (Genesis 37-50).

Walking by faith requires a strong determination to follow God's plan regardless what life throws your way. Look to Daniel to discover how to have the resolve not to sin (Daniel 1:8).

Walking by faith means you have the courage to stand up for the hurting, broken, and down-trodden, to face death yourself for the good of others. Look at Esther and how she risked the death penalty to save the Jews (Esther).

You just may have to play the part of a fool. Think about Noah building an ark for a flood when it had never even rained on earth. Think about Abraham clinging to the promise that he would be the father of many nations even though he was childless at the age of 100. Think about Moses standing before the Israelites in the wilderness telling them they would eat meat until it disgusted them but having no idea where that meat would come from. Think about Joshua marching around the walls of Jericho as God had told him to and wondering what good it was going to do.

If you choose this path, you must be willing to get out of your comfort zone, to run from the Americanized brand of Christianity that so many of us have known our entire lives. You must be willing to let God take your world and turn it upside down, shake it up, and start all over again. You must be willing to let God out of the neat little box that you have put him in, to let him show up as he sees fit.

Maybe it will be a calling to do something you never dreamed before: foster or adopt children, leave your job and become a missionary, trade in the worldly comforts for heavenly treasures.

Maybe it won't be that clean and neat and socially acceptable. Maybe, like me, your world will be turned upside down by the pain of adultery and divorce. Or maybe you will be faced with infertility or addiction. Maybe you will have a prodigal child that completely changes the direction of your life. Or, maybe you've experienced the loss of a child - a hurt like no other.

I don't know what your shake up might look like, but I know that if you will give it to God - throw up your arms in surrender and ask him to use it to change your life - he will honor your request. He will take you on a journey, teach you to walk by faith, entrust you with some of life's most treasured moments.

He will build a faith in you - faith that moves mountains and moves God's hands. He will teach you to live this life with abandonment, giving you a freedom to walk in all his fullness and grace. He will prepare you to be used mightily in this life for his glory.

Perhaps you've already experienced your life being turned upside down, toppled without any control. Perhaps, like me, you've found yourself wandering in the wilderness, watching his fire direct your every step by night, a cloud lead you by day. Perhaps you sense you are on the edge of the Promised Land, just waiting for him to give the command to take possession.

And yet, you are tired and weary. You've lost friends who don't understand how you can continue to cling to a promise that is so obviously dead and gone. You are so close and yet feel so far away. You are struggling with temptations to just settle, even though you know it is less than God's best. You simply don't know how much longer you can stand.

You are not alone. I see God raising up a remnant of believers, those he knows will be obedient. He is looking for those with clean hands and a pure heart, those who will choose obedience even if it costs them everything this world has to offer. He is looking for those who will throw caution to the wind, believe that he has an abundant life (John 10:10) waiting if we will follow his ways. He is looking for those whose hearts have been purified, whose faith has been strengthened by the trials of this life (James 1:2). He is looking for those who will cling to his promises even when it seems there is no hope.

Be strong and courageous, my friends!

God has specifically chosen you to be a part of this remnant, those who will allow him to take their lives and mold them into what he wants. He has chosen you to have your faith tested and tried, and he promises that the fire will only purify you - not burn you. He has promised that he will be with you every single step, walking with you, carrying you, supporting you. He promises that he is still in control even when life seems to be spiraling wildly out of control.

He is teaching you to trust him so he can do something bigger and better than you ever dreamed possible (Ephesians 3:20-21).

He is teaching you to let go and trust him with your heart, your soul, your life (Proverbs 3:5-6).

He is teaching you to walk every single day in the spirit so that he can do even greater works in you and through you (John 14:12). He is preparing you to be a beacon of light and hope to a world which desperately needs to see Jesus.

I don't know where you are on this journey of walking by faith, but I encourage you - beg you, plead with you - to wave the white flag of surrender. Let God take your life, your pain, your loss and use it for his glory. Ask him to do an amazing work in you so he can do an amazing work through you.

Get out of that boat and step onto the water . . . and never take your eyes off him. It is a decision you will never regret!

- <https://bit.ly/2URwJLA>

And truly that is what we see here with Gideon. What he was going to do his family and friends would think he was foolish. Was this out of his comfort zone? It absolutely was. But Gideon was willing to walk by faith and not by sight.

Gideon wanted to be used by God so that God might show His might through Gideon.

For Gideon, he destroyed the altar of Baal. He tore down the image of Asherah. And he built an altar to God and sacrificed to the Lord just as God had told him. A walk of faith!

Gideon let go of the past and pressed on towards that upward calling that God had given him – ***GIDEON TAKES A STAND.***

Now here's the thing. When you take a stand for God everything goes smoothly, right? Wrong, it usually causes trouble and that is what we will see here – ***THE ENEMY RISES UP!***

VERSES 28-30

Look at what is happening here.

During the night Gideon and his ten men tore down the altar, cut down the wooden image of Asherah and on the altar that Gideon had set up for the Lord, the second bull was being offered on it.

As morning came and the men of the city came to worship their gods, they found them torn down and they were not happy. All that they had to worship their gods by was no longer there, their gods were nothing more than a pile of rubble!

And thus, they are looking for the person who did this. And as they searched, it did not take them long before they found out that it was Gideon who did this to their gods!

Once they knew it was Gideon, then they call for Joash to come and bring out his son Gideon so they could put him to death for his actions, for destroying their place of worship to the god Baal and Asherah. I guess for destroying their gods!

Let me say this, when you come to Christ, when you are serving the Lord, when God is moving, the enemy is going to try to stop you and he will do anything and everything to accomplish this task.

That is what we see here. For years they were worshipping false gods and Satan did not care. But now that they destroyed the false gods and were worshipping the true and living God, Satan rises up and gets these men to work for him, calling for the destruction of this man of God, Gideon!

For us, many see difficulty, these oppositions as a closed door, they are not. Let me explain. We are told,

We tend to associate an open door for ministry with smooth and trouble-free waters, oftentimes regarding opposition as God's way of telling us that we should look somewhere else or do something different.

That is why I find Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 so challenging. In these verses, Paul indicates his intention to stay in Ephesus for a while longer before moving on to Macedonia and Corinth, because, as he says, "a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." I find this challenging because Paul apparently has no trouble seeing that "a wide door for effective work" can exist at the same time and in the same place as "many adversaries." In other words, he does not see opposition in the work of ministry as a sign from the Lord that his work is finished. But, just the opposite, he sees opposition as properly existing alongside a "wide" open door for ministry.

I wonder, humanly speaking, how many "wide open" doors we have turned away from in our lives and ministries simply because we took opposition as a sign that it was time to move on to something different. Paul's words should serve as a helpful reminder to us that the presence of opposition, in and of itself, is not an indication that our work is finished in the place where we are currently serving. In fact, just the opposite may be true: in many cases, it is more likely the absence of opposition that tells us we need to move on to a different ministry opportunity or context.

In this regard, I am reminded of something that G. Campbell Morgan - the predecessor to Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel in London - once said: "If there is no opposition in the place where you are serving, then you are serving in the wrong place." Morgan's point is that it is actually the absence of opposition, not the presence of it, that indicates something is wrong with our ministries. We are either not doing anything or we are not preaching the whole counsel of God's Word, or both. God's work and God's Word will most assuredly produce a certain amount of opposition. It will make some people uncomfortable (John 16:8; 1 Thess. 1:5), it will make others angry (John 6:61, 66; 2 Tim. 4:3), and it will make still others rise up in opposition against us (John 8:37; 15:18-21). It has been that way since at least the time of Cain and Abel.

We ought to expect it in our own lives and prepare ourselves for it in advance.

John Calvin, interestingly enough, believed that every minister of the gospel should be trained not only in the Bible, theology, and church history but also in handling opposition. He realized that opposition is such a central part of the ministry that all candidates should be thoroughly acquainted with the different forms it may take and how to handle each of them. Our churches would no doubt be stronger today if we could take a page from Calvin's book in this regard and train our ministerial candidates in how they might better handle conflict, criticism, and difficulty.

If the church could produce a generation of Christians willing to interpret their circumstances in the light of their calling and to trust God in the midst of opposition - even continual opposition - that generation could turn the world upside down.

In addition to this tendency to see opposition as a closed door for ministry, we also need to be wary of another extreme in our thinking - the idea that the absence of visible fruit in our ministries also indicates that we ought to move on to some other sphere of service. We make mistakes on both fronts. We tend to see both the presence of opposition *and* the absence of blessing as evidence that we have a closed door for ministry. But such is not necessarily the case.

Isaiah's ministry immediately comes to mind. In Isaiah 6:9-10, the Lord tells the prophet that his entire ministry will be one in which he will "make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." In other words, Isaiah's ministry will consist entirely of opposition. There will be no visible fruit that comes from his preaching and his labors among the people of Judah - at least not fruit in the way that we would conceive of it today. There will be only opposition.

Jeremiah, too, is told something very similar by the Lord. He is told that his entire ministry will be one in which the "whole land" will fight against him (Jer. 1:18-19). He, too, will see no fruit from his ministry. He will see only cursing (15:10), mocking (20:7), beating, and imprisonment (37:15), and many will try to put him to death (26:8). Even his close friends will turn their backs on him and denounce him and the work that God has given him to do (20:10).

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah are called by Himself to ministries that consist entirely of opposition. For them to see continual opposition as evidence that they are serving in the wrong place would be to dismiss God's call upon their lives. Their example doesn't mean that we should seek out opposition. But it also doesn't mean that we should run from it either.

Their example suggests that God may well intend for you and me to stay put in our current sphere of ministry even when there is absolutely no visible fruit or sign of God's blessing anywhere. He certainly intended that for Isaiah and Jeremiah. Why, then, do we so quickly assume that we need to quit or do something different when we face circumstances similar to what they experienced?

It may well be that God wants us to do something different and not to endure constant opposition. But it may also be that He wants us to stay put and to shine in the midst of extreme difficulty. Our circumstances cannot answer this question. Our sense of calling can. But we so often allow our sense of calling to be interpreted through the lens of our circumstances rather than interpreting our circumstances through the lens of our calling. I am convinced that if the church could produce a generation of Christians willing to interpret their circumstances in the light of their calling and to trust God in the midst of opposition - even continual opposition - that generation could turn the world upside down, as it were, and point many people the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord make it so.

- <https://bit.ly/34iyOmV>

Absolutely. And that is what we see here with Gideon. He does what the Lord wants him to do and ***THE ENEMY RISES UP!***

And that can be discouraging, but I want to show you the last point in our study, because it should be very encouraging – ***THE FAITH OF GIDEON IS CAUGHT!***

VERSES 31-32

Look at what has happened. Gideon gets saved, you might say. His life is given to the true and living God and he is living what he believes.

And here we see the men of the city confront Joash, Gideon's father, wanting him to bring out Gideon and something changes in the heart and actions of this man, Gideon's father.

It is like the light went on in the mind of Joash, Gideon's father. Here we see Joash stick-up for his son by basically saying, ***"If Baal is a god, let him take care of himself! Why do you need to help this god out?"***

It is always sad when people have to help their god out.

Remember the story of Dagon when the Philistines took the Ark and placed it next to their god Dagon, in this temple. When they woke up the next morning poor Dagon was flat on his face, he had fallen, and he couldn't get up!

So the Philistines picked him back up. I guess this fish god couldn't do it himself.

Then, on the following morning he was back on the floor again, but this time his head and the palms of his hands were broken off, all that was intact was his torso. Not much of a god?

Why did God do this? Because God will not share his glory with anyone, not even this false god. He put them to shame; they are nothing but statues, idols.

It is as Psalm 115:3-8 tells us, **"They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them."**

Also, in Psalm 135:15-18 we see this same thought, **“The idols of the nations are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.”**

And what Gideon came to see and believe, in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so did his father!

Make no mistake about it, people are watching how we live out our lives. And we might not even see it, but they are watching. And as they do, what will they see?

For Joash, he saw that his son’s faith was real, and he came back to the Lord!

Let me show you what I mean about living what we say we believe and what a powerful witness it is to people. We are told,

“What argument of mine led you to Christ?” asked a missionary in Egypt of an educated Mohammedan who was preaching Christ with great zeal and success.

The missionary was surprised to receive this answer, “Every argument presented I could refute, at least to my satisfaction. It was your life that convinced me of salvation through Christ.”

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

I don’t think we realize how amazing this is for Joash. Again, he was not worshipping the true and living God. He had an altar of Baal; it was his and people from the community came to worship at this altar to Baal. He had a wooden image of Asherah, and again, people came to worship at this image that Joash had.

And now all that has changed because of the influence of his son upon his life.

I wonder the difference we can make as we shine for Jesus!

Think about the sun for a minute.

The sun is some 93 million miles from the earth. It holds some 99.8% of the mass of our solar system. You could fit one million earths into the sun. And yet, what does the sun do?

The sun *SHINES!*

And as the sun shines it illuminates our skies, our lives you might say.

What are we as Christians to do?

Jesus tells us, **“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”** Matthew 5:14-16.

Notice what Jesus says we are to be, **“You are the light of the world . . .”** And once again, with this picture, Jesus is saying, ***“You alone are the light of the world!”***

And that should just make sense. We are to shine for Jesus and shine brightly for Him. When people see our lives, they should be seen as a lighthouse to warn people of the danger ahead of them and direct them to safety, which is only found in Jesus!

Now the problem comes when we are not shining because we are hiding our light and if we are doing that guess what we are blending into? We are blending into the darkness! Place your light, your life in Christ in such a way that people can see it.

There is another problem, our light may be dim, going out. What can we do? I like what one writer said,

A man returning from a journey brought his wife a matchbox that would glow in the dark. After he gave it to her, she turned out the light, but it could not be seen. Both thought they had been cheated. Then the wife noticed some French words on the box and asked a friend to translate them. The inscription said: ***“If you want me to shine in the night, keep me in the light.”***

So it is with us! We must expose ourselves to Jesus, delight in his Word, and spend time in prayer soaking up his rays. As Paul says:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

If you want to shine in the night, keep your eyes on the light.

- R. Kent Hughes, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 85-86

And not only does our lives shine Jesus to people, but our light, as it shines, brings glory and honor to the Father!

And, our faith, our walk can encourage other believers, it can help strengthen their faith or encourage them to move forward for the Lord!

And now we see Joash call his son, Jerubbaal, which means ***“let Baal contend.”***

Why did he do that, why did he give him a name like that?

I think to remind people of what Gideon had done, how he tore down these pagan idols, this worship center and Baal was not able to do anything about it!

We have seen . . .

THE WORK OF GOD – as God calls us to take that step of faith, He shows us what we need to do.

GIDEON TAKES A STAND – and we saw how we must take a stand for what we believe in as well. The world may see it as foolishness, but don't hold back, walk by faith!

THE ENEMY RISES UP – and how true that is. It doesn't matter if we just come to the faith or we have been a believer for years, once we are serving the Lord, the enemy will rise up and try to stop us. Don't be discouraged, keep walking.

THE FAITH OF GIDEON IS CAUGHT – and how true that is. Our faith is seen by others. Our faith may encourage other believers and it may draw people to Jesus. We need to keep shining!