

JUDGES 6:33-40
THE EMPOWERING OF GOD!

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

As we have seen in our study of Judges chapter 6 over the last several weeks, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and thus, God allowed the Midianites to oppress them.

And these Midianites would come down upon the children of Israel during harvest time and once the harvest was in, they would steal their food, take their sheep, ox and donkey's.

And after some seven years of this oppression they cry out to God to deliver them and God raises up a deliverer by the name of Gideon.

Now Gideon was not an impressive warrior. He was not a fighting man. In fact, when God called Gideon, he was in the winepress trying to thresh his wheat, hiding from the Midianites.

But God said of this man, "**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor! . . . Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.**" Judges 6:12, 16.

After this we see Gideon worship the Lord and the fear he had was replaced with peace as Gideon builds an altar that he called, "**The-LORD-Shalom.**" Or Yahweh is peace!

Now before Gideon goes to war against this enemy, the Midianites, he has to deal with the enemy within his own home and in his community.

You see, Gideon's father had setup an altar to Baal and an image of Asherah that the community came to worship. These were pagan gods and yet, within Gideon's own family, that is what they were doing.

And I would suspect that even Gideon was worshiping at this altar and image before the Lord called him and he went forward.

Now the Lord tells Gideon to tear these pagan shrines down, which he does do. And the men of the city are upset, they found out it was Gideon who had done this, and they come to Gideon's father, Joash, and demand that he bring Gideon out to them so they could put him to death!

But Gideon's father saw the change in Gideon, and it touched his life as well. And this idol worshiping man tells the men of the city, "... 'Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!' Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, 'Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.'" Judges 6:31-32.

Here is a man who had this altar to Baal and this image to Asherah and after it is destroyed by Gideon, Joash changes and mocks these gods and even with the changing of Gideon's name to mock these gods who could do nothing to save themselves!

This morning we are going to look at – ***THE EMPOWERING OF GOD!***

Now some people are uncomfortable with this topic, most of the time because of the strange things that people claim the Holy Spirit is doing, empowering them to do. But we need to look at what the Scriptures are saying because we see Gideon empowered by the Holy Spirit and in the New Testament, this empowering is for every one of us, and there are reasons for that, as you will see.

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

THE ENEMY GATHERS – JUDGES 6:33

HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS – JUDGES 6:34-35

DOUBTING GOD’S WORD – JUDGES 6:36-40

As you can see, these are some important points for us to understand and learn from. With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 6, beginning in verse 33, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we look at the subject of – ***THE EMPOWERING OF GOD!***

JUDGES 6

VERSE 33

As you see the enemy gathering, it tells me that it must have been harvest time and now that the children of Israel have done all the work, they are coming in to take the harvest from them.

Now as you read this you may think that this is a few men coming down, or maybe even 100 men coming down. That is not the case.

The Midianites, along with these other nations, some 135,000 men were coming down! Where do I get that number from? In Judges 8:10 we are told the number of men. In fact, in Judges 7:12 we are told, **“Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.”**

And these people gather together in the Valley of Jezreel and, interestingly enough, this is where the final battle will take place as the nations of the world gather to fight against God and His people.

We know this place as the Valley of Megiddo and the battle, of course, is the Battle of Armageddon!

How does this even apply to us today?

The Bible tells us that we, as Christians, have three main enemies that try to take the spoil or fruit from our lives, try to bring us down and destroy us. Those three enemies are as follows:

the world, the flesh and the Devil!

Let me share with you what these are all about so that you will be wise and won't fall prey to the enemy's attacks.

First of all, let's look at the first enemy, - ***THE WORLD!***

In I John 2:15-17 John wrote, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

Notice that you can't love God and the world at the same time. Why is that? Because the world is pulling you towards its ways; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, while God is drawing you towards Him!

Make no mistake about it, the world or the world system I guess I should say, is trying to draw you away from God and to accept what it has to offer.

The interesting thing here is that John tells us that this world system is passing away but as we draw close to God, He is forever. What are you investing your life in?

The world has a strong pull today and we see many in the church moving away from God, moving away from what God is telling us in His Word, and they are being drawn back into the world with its corrupt ways! Be careful.

Not only is the world at war with us, fighting against us, but so too is the flesh and John spoke of that in the passage we just read.

But listen to what Paul wrote as well in Romans 7:15-25, **“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”**

Paul is speaking of this spiritual battle that is going on in his life. And he has to be speaking after he is saved because before he came to Christ, this really is not an issue. But now it is. The flesh is warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.

Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:17-18, **“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”**

This is a real battle, make no mistake about it.

And the problem is simple when you think about it. After we are saved, we have a new spirit and a redeemed soul living in an unredeemed body. And that is what leads to frustration.

That is why Paul wrote in Romans 8:23, **“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

We are waiting for the day that we get our new, redeemed bodies, but until then, we groan in these bodies, wanting to do what is right, what is pleasing to the Lord and at times, we fail!

In other words, we have this new life in an old container and we are waiting for that new container in which our spirit and soul will dwell in for eternity, and that is the time of the Rapture when we will get these new bodies.

John put it like this in I John 3:2-3, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

So until that time, we are to fight that good fight of faith and a big part of that battle is going to be against our fallen nature!

And Paul tells us, as he was telling Timothy, what we should do in II Timothy 2:22,
“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

We are to flee those fleshly desires and focus on that which is right, that which is good, we are to focus on the Lord.

You see, as Paul wrote, **“Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!”**

He is the One who can help us as we surrender to the Spirit and crucify the flesh, or as Paul wrote, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”** Galatians 5:16.

So the world, the flesh is trying to draw us away from God, it is doing battle against us, and I believe that it is the Devil who is empowering or doing these things, using the world and the flesh against us!

In I Peter 5:8 we see Peter warn us by saying, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”**

Do you see how the devil is looking for those that he can devour, tear apart, just as a lion does its prey!

I don't know if you have noticed this, but I truly think he has turned up the heat and he is letting it all fly. All the immorality that is growing. All the wickedness that we see. All the churches that are departing from the faith of God found in the word of God.

And then our own lives, all kinds of things that are happening to us. And we may wonder what we can do to overcome this. We may wonder why Peter warned about the Devil and what he is doing, but then didn't tell us what we should do.

Let me say this, he did! Listen to what he wrote, **“Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”** I Peter 5:9-11.

Don't be discouraged by all that you are going through. Look to the Lord and resist the Devil by being steadfast in the faith. We are going to have tough times, that is not the issue. The real issue is how are we going to handle it?

Are we going to give in to the world, the flesh and the Devil or are we going to resist these things steadfast in the faith?

But for Gideon, he is far outnumbered. There is no way he can win this battle. And that is very true. But God never said that Gideon was going to win this battle but that the Lord was going to win this battle through Gideon. All Gideon had to do was walk by faith.

So we see that ***THE ENEMY GATHERS!***

And now, we are going to see the ***HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERING!***

VERSES 34-35

Now when Gideon blows the trumpet, according to Judges 7:3, 32,000 men gathered around Gideon to do battle against the enemy. The odds are not great, 32,000 against 135,000 but they are better than 1 against 135,000!

But again, what is going to be the secret of Gideon winning this battle? Is it going to be the number of soldiers that he has?

No, Gideon is going to be empowered by the Holy Spirit! That is how he is going to win this battle!

And we see this in the Old Testament where God's Spirit is poured out upon certain individuals to do a certain work.

But, in the New Testament God's Spirit is poured out upon believers to empower them for the work of bringing the Gospel message forward!

We see this in Acts 1:8 as Jesus tells us, "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**"

And The Amplified Bible tells us of this verse, "**But you shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth.**"

Now I want to spend a few minutes talking about this because there are many today who want to say that this is not something for us today. It was for the first century church and once the church was established, there is no need for that kind of power!

Are you kidding me? Look at this world today and do you really think we are going to make an impact by our own efforts, by the programs we put together? Absolutely not!

Let me show you how this plays out, what the Holy Spirit is doing, and we are going to see three Greek prepositions used of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, in John 14:17 we are told of the Holy Spirit, that He is, "**the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells *with you* and will be *in you*.**"

In this verse we see two aspects regarding the Holy Spirit's workings in the world.

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will be working in the lives of the disciples and us as He tells us that they will, “**. . . know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**”

First of all, He dwells “**with**” them and us and then He will be “**in**” them and us!

Now some like to skip over this, ignore this, and yet it is important for us to understand what Jesus is saying here. He does not just use words that have no meaning to them!

Here in John chapter 14 Jesus used two different Greek prepositions which designate the different relationships of the Holy Spirit towards us.

First of all, He uses the Greek word, PARA and this Greek word speaks of the Holy Spirit dwelling “**with**” us.

In other words, the Holy Spirit is with men drawing them to Jesus, drawing out a Bride for Christ.

He does this by convicting the world of sin, showing them that sin has separated them from God and this sin that Jesus is speaking of is the sin of rejecting Him, His free gift of life that He has given to those who believe in Him.

He does this by convicting the world of righteousness, showing them that the only righteousness that God will accept is the righteousness of Christ because our righteousness is like filthy rags!

And he does this by reproofing the world of judgment, that apart from Christ they will come up short and be judged!

That is the work of the Holy Spirit in an unbelieving world as the Holy Spirit comes alongside unbelievers to draw them to Christ!

Then Jesus uses the Greek word EN and this Greek word speaks of the Holy Spirit dwelling “**in**” us.

You see, the moment you get saved, the Holy Spirit is no longer with you drawing you to Christ, but now the Holy Spirit comes inside of you.

And when He does, He becomes our helper, our teacher, our guide, the Holy Spirit is conforming us into the image of Christ, and He will produce fruit in our lives.

As we submit to the Holy Spirit’s guiding, He will be our helper in doing what is right and keeping us away from that which is wrong.

The Holy Spirit will be our teacher revealing the truths of God from the Word of God.

He will bring to remembrance those things we need to know in a given situation.

The Holy Spirit will guide us down the right path as we gain spiritual discernment that is according to the Word of God.

And the Holy Spirit is conforming us into the image of Christ as we submit to Him.

It is out of this relationship that the fruit of the Spirit naturally grows in our lives!

That is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer as the Holy Spirit comes inside of us!

But there is one more Greek preposition that we need to look at regarding the Holy Spirit and that is found in Acts 1:8 where we are told, “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

This third Greek preposition that is used of the Holy Spirit is EPI and this word speaks of the Holy Spirit coming “**upon**” us or “**over**” us empowering us for service.

Now there are many in the church today who like to discredit this and say that there is no such thing as the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. They will tell you that this phrase, *“baptism with the Holy Spirit”* is not found in the Bible and that is true.

But just because a phrase is not spoken of in the Scriptures, does that mean the Bible is silent on this subject? Absolutely not!

The word *“Trinity”* is not in the Bible and yet as you look at the Scriptures you can clearly see that there is One God manifested in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We see the Trinity in the Scriptures, but just not the word!

Now, when you look at the church today it seems to be anemic, like it has no power and maybe one of the reasons that the church is lacking this power for service is because it is denying this empowering with the Holy Spirit in their lives!

It is interesting the way A. W. Tozer saw this. His perspective of the situation regarding the church in his day and I especially see this even more so today, was this, *“If the Holy Spirit was completely taken out of the work of the first century church, 90% of what they did would come to a screeching halt. If the Holy Spirit was completely taken out of the work in the church today, only 10% of what the church was doing would come to a halt.”*

You see, the first century church was not only directed by the Holy Spirit, but also empowered by the Holy Spirit and like the first century church, the church of today needs that power to bring forth the Gospel message to a lost and dying world!

And then in I Corinthians 12:13 we see Paul speak of a baptism into the body of Christ, our salvation, and the Holy Spirit is the one doing the baptizing here.

We read **“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”**

Do you see that it is the Spirit of God that baptizes us here into the body of Christ! And this *“body-like”* unity of Christians is not a goal to achieve; it is a fact to be recognized.

Again, Paul clearly tells us that we were all baptized into one body! Paul here is writing of the common *“immersion”* that all believers have in the Holy Spirit and in Jesus, a common *“immersion”* which brings them into one body and this work is done by the Holy Spirit!

But the baptism with the Holy Spirit, this empowering is different. Let me show you what I mean.

We see in Matthew chapter 3, John the Baptist tell us this, **“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”** Matthew 3:11.

Who is John speaking of here?

He is speaking of Jesus and He is the one doing the baptizing.

Now, we have talked about the Holy Spirit doing the baptizing as we become believers. This is where the Holy Spirit comes in us, indwells us.

But here we are told that Jesus is going to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. This is different, this is the Holy Spirit coming upon us, empowering us for service.

Let me show you how this is played out in the New Testament.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, we see Jesus appear to His men. And in John 20:21-22 we are told, **“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”**

Keep in mind that up to this point the Holy Spirit was “**with**” the disciples. They were still Old Testament saints up to this point because Jesus had not died for the sins of the world yet and rose the third day.

But now, here in John chapter 20 Jesus has gone to the cross of Calvary and paid in full the penalty for our sins and has risen the third day.

And as Jesus comes to His men, we are told that He breathed on them and He said to them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**”

It is at this moment the Holy Spirit was indwelling them. They are now New Testament Christians at this point. I think that is clear for most of us, unless you come to this with a pre-conceived idea.

You see, at this point, the disciples are born again. Although they were already following Jesus, they were not yet regenerated because, as I have said, He had not yet died for their sins.

But here Jesus breathes on them, which to me is reminiscent of Genesis 2:7, when God breathed life into Adam’s nostrils, and he became a living soul.

Here we see Jesus breath on them and their spirit comes alive you might say, they are born again!

Now what is amazing to me is that when I read some commentators and Bible teachers regarding what took place here in John chapter 20, they just pass over this as if nothing happened!

Let me say this, when Jesus breaths upon you and tells you to “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” something is going to happen, and something did happen here in the lives of these disciples!

The Holy Spirit has indwelt them, you can’t ignore that fact, nor can you miss it unless it goes against some preconceived ideas you might have on this subject, as I have said.

But let's try to remove our biases and preconceived ideas and just see what the Scriptures say, and let's receive all that God has for us.

So at this point in their lives, the disciples had all the information. They had spent a little over three years walking with Jesus and being taught by Jesus. And thus, you would think it was time for them to go out and spread the good news of Christ.

Not yet!

They had all the information at this point, but they lacked the dynamic power to take that information to a world lost and dying in their sins.

They are saved at this point but not empowered.

And thus, Jesus tells them in Luke 24:49 what they needed to do. He said to them,

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

The disciples were told to wait until they were empowered by the Holy Spirit and the reason is simple. If they did not wait, they would be working in the power of their flesh instead of by the Spirit of God, and they will only become frustrated and unfruitful in their endeavor.

They needed to wait in Jerusalem until they were empowered for service.

Now don't get me wrong. Information is important, especially the truth, but without the power to properly use it, it is basically empty.

Think of it this way for a minute.

You can buy the top of the line power tool; one of those battery-operated ones. And they look great and have the potential to work great. But as good as those tools look and are, if the power supply is not plugged in or charged up, they are worthless.

A drill won't work. A saw will stand still. The nail gun will just sit there. And you can try very hard to use them without the power, but through all your efforts you will only become frustrated, discouraged, and unfruitful.

You need the power to run the tools, just as the disciples needed the power of God's Spirit in their lives. We need the power of God's Spirit to take the information we know, and again, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, we will be witnesses of Him!

And think about this for a minute. How were the disciples of Jesus after His arrest, crucifixion and resurrection?

The disciples of Jesus were afraid, scared, hiding after the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus and when Jesus meets with them here in John chapter 20, they are still hiding.

And now Jesus breaths on them and they receive the Holy Spirit, they are New Testament saints right now, but they don't have the power to take what they have been taught and move the Gospel message forward. In fact, they are not doing much for Jesus at this point.

But think about this, after they are empowered by the Holy Spirit, they become the most radical group of believers in the history of the world.

This group of disciples who waited to be endowed with power from on high, and it was this group of Christians who, having received the promise of the Father, turned the world upside down without a single book of the New Testament (Acts 17:6).

They didn't have Romans, Hebrews, or the Epistles of John. They didn't have the Gospels, Galatians, or the Book of Revelation.

What they did have, and the reason they were so powerful was that they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to move the Gospel message forward.

And we see this empowering in Acts chapter 2, not the Holy Spirit coming in them, they are already saved as Jesus breathed on them and said to them **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”**

And after this we see Peter give this powerful sermon and some three thousand souls were saved that day! Peter wasn't fearful but empowered to speak forth the things of God.

And we see this played out for us as Peter finishes his sermon in Acts chapter 2, **“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”** Acts 2:37-39.

And I want you to see that this promise of the empowering of the Holy Spirit is not just for the first century church, but it is for all of us!

And they accomplished all this through the empowering of God's Spirit on their lives!

What are we going to receive when the Holy Spirit comes upon us? Jesus says that we will receive **“power”** and this Greek word for **“power”** is DUNAMIS, from which we get our English words “dynamic” or “dynamite” from.

Now what kind of power did they receive?

Is it that explosive power to speak in tongues? No, not at all!

Then maybe it is the power to roar like a lion, bark like a dog, hop like a kangaroo, or convulse on the floor uncontrollably? Not even close!

Or maybe it is the power to be slain in the Spirit? Not at all!

How about the power will be so strong that the people will be worked into a chaotic frenzy in the church, running all around, doing back flips, being drunk in the Spirit. That has to be the ultimate moving of God's Spirit in power, right? Wrong!

None of these foolish things reflect what Jesus was speaking of when He told us we shall receive that explosive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

Now some of you may be offended by what I have just said, and that is not my intention at all. I am not trying to put people down that do this, all I am saying is that this is not what Jesus was speaking of and what they are doing is not of the Holy Spirit, it is not of God. Not because I say so, but because that is what God's Word tells us!

How can I be so sure that I am right, and they are wrong?

Because Jesus makes it very clear what He is talking about. He tells us that this power in your life will be used in such a way so that you will "**be witnesses**" of Christ!

And there is a point that needs to be made here. Notice that it doesn't say that we are to go out and witness. Now that is not wrong, but that is not what Jesus is saying here. He is saying that the Holy Spirit will empower us to be witnesses of Christ. That burning love we have for Christ in our hearts is manifested in our actions and as people look at us, they see something vastly different. They see God working in us, they see Christ in us! We are to be witnesses of Christ! And that will open the door for us to speak of Christ. If they see us live what we say we believe, they will want to know more!

Now think of this power that Jesus is giving us, this empowering with the Holy Spirit in our lives to be witnesses of Christ like steam in a locomotive.

The steam in a locomotive is not there to toot the whistle, even though that may be fun, it may sound cool.

But this steam in a locomotive is there to move the train forward so it can arrive at its destination.

The same is true with the power of God's Spirit in our lives. This empowering is not there for us to toot our whistle or draw attention to ourselves, but to move the Gospel message forward!

Thus, in many of these ultra-charismatic groups, when it comes to these bizarre activities that are attributed to the Holy Spirit, who is getting the attention?

The people are and not Jesus!

They are tooting their whistle and the Gospel message is not going forward!

Let me explain by giving you this example.

Sir Henry Stanley said this of David Livingstone after discovering and spending time with him in Central Africa, "If I had been with him any longer I would have been compelled to be a Christian, and He never spoke to me about it at all."

You see, Livingstone's witness went far beyond words, he lived what he believed and so should we, but we can't accomplish that on our own, we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives, that empowering to live and be a witness of Jesus!

How do we know when we are running low of this power in our lives?

It really is simple.

You know that you are running low on the power of God working in you by the way you treat people, if there is no love, we are short with them, sarcastic with them, biting people's heads off, don't have time for them, and-so-on, you need a filling!

What is the cure?

Ask God to fill you and believe it by faith, apply it to your life, live what you believe!

Remember in Acts chapter 4, after Peter and John are arrested by the Jewish religious leaders for sharing Jesus. And as they were going to let them go, they told Peter and John not to speak of Jesus anymore. And they responded, **“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”** Acts 4:20.

So after some more threatening, they let Peter and John go and they returned to the believers in Jerusalem, and this is what we are told took place beginning in verse 24 of Acts chapter 4, **“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: “Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.” For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”**

Notice what they are praying for. Not to be delivered from the persecution that they were facing but to be able to speak forth the Word of God with boldness.

And then it says that **“they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”** Now think about that. If they were already saved, and they were, then what is this about?

It is the empowering with the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Word of God with boldness, to move the Gospel message forward and we are told when they were empowered that “**they spoke the word of God with boldness.**”

And look again at what we are told in Acts 1:8, “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

This work began in Jerusalem, which we see in Acts chapters 1-7, then to Judea and Samaria, in Acts 8-12, and finally to the ends of the earth, Acts 13-28.

How does that apply to us as individuals?

Your home is your Jerusalem, and before you spread out you must take care of your home, your family.

Then from there your Judea and Samaria may be your neighbors.

Then from there, to the uttermost parts of the earth, it may be your work and-so-on. It may speak of missionary support or whatever.

I think you get the idea, and the same is true for us as a church. We have our Jerusalem, Manitowoc.

We have our Judea and Samaria, the surrounding communities.

And we have our uttermost parts of the earth, this state, this nation and even this world!

Like Gideon, we need to be empowered by God’s Spirit if we are to accomplish the work that He has called us to do!

I like what one writer had to say as he puts this into perspective for us. He wrote,
A town somewhere in the U.S. was battered one night by hurricane-force winds.

In the morning, after the storm had abated, the citizens emerged from their homes and shelters to assess the damage. The power of the storm quickly became clear to one investigator who was dumbfounded by an incredible discovery.

Mouths dropped open as people came to check out his report: a common plastic drinking straw driven deep into a telephone pole by the night's vicious winds.

Obviously, under normal circumstances, a flimsy straw could never penetrate a telephone pole. But the tremendous power of the wind had driven the straw into the wood like a spike.

As believers living in an ungodly world, sometimes we wonder if we can ever make a difference.

We wonder if we can effectively penetrate our cynical culture with the good news God has given us to proclaim.

The answer lies in the source of our power.

If we rely on our own strength and methods, then no, we cannot make much of a difference.

But if we choose to be driven by God's limitless power, we become like that straw in the hurricane where nothing can stop us.

We can indeed make a dramatic difference.

- Greg Laurie, On Fire, pp. 21-22

Why not receive all that God has for us and as we do, may others be able to say of us, as they said of Paul and his companions, “... **‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’**” Acts 17:6.

Or really, in this upside-down world, by the power of God’s Spirit, may we turn this world right-side up!

For Gideon, it was not going to be his own power or strength, but the empowering of God to win this battle.

And we see here that when Gideon blows the trumpet, according to Judges 7:3, 32,000 men gathered around Gideon to do battle against the enemy.

The odds are not great, 32,000 against 135,000 but they are better than 1 against 135,000, as I have said!

So Gideon is empowered by God, the Holy Spirit has come upon him and now he is ready to fight, right?

Well, not exactly. Let’s read on and see what he does now as we look at our last point – ***DOUBTING GOD’S WORD!***

VERSES 36-40

Gideon was told by God that He would give him the victory. Gideon was empowered by the Spirit of God to go forward and obtain this victory. And yet, there is still doubt.

He wants confirmation in what he should do, should he go forward.

And just to make sure, he puts out this fleece, actually, two of them to make sure.

First, if God is in this then the fleece of wool that he put out will be wet in the morning and the ground will be dry.

And that is exactly what happened and thus, Gideon is ready to go, right?

Not yet.

You see, the wool is more prone to hold water and the ground would dry faster, thus, just to be sure, reverse the fleece and see what happens, make the ground wet and the fleece of wool dry.

And God did do that and confirmed to Gideon what he was to do, defeat this enemy!

What about these fleeces, do we still do them today? Do we see it in the New Testament?

Let me start out by saying this. Yes, even today there are some Christians who put out a fleece to determine the will of God, but I don't believe this is Scriptural.

We do not see Jesus teach it in the Gospels.

We do not see it practiced in the book of Acts.

And there is no teaching on it in the Epistles.

So I don't think we should put out a fleece to determine the will of God.

Then what are we supposed to do?

I believe we are to let the Holy Spirit guide us, He will direct us in when and where we are to walk, what we are to do.

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 2:9-16, **“But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”**

You see, the Spirit of God reveals to us the mind of God and as we study His Word, as we are in fellowship with Him, He will show us these things, the will of God!

Let me put it like this and I want you to hear this. ***IT IS THE WORD OF GOD, OPENED UP TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THAT WILL LEAD THE MAN OF GOD!***

Make no mistake about it – ***THE ENEMY GATHERS*** and wants to take back the spoil, the fruit from our lives. Don't let them. Stand fast in the faith!

And, we all need - ***HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERING*** to move the Gospel message forward. Don't try to do it on your own.

It is like this story tells us. We are told,

While visiting Grand Coulee Dam, my family and I were surprised to see that the visitors' center was dark. It was a sunny day, so we thought the center might have tinted windows, but as we got closer we realized there were no lights on.

We went in and saw that none of the displays were working.

Suddenly it became clear: there was no power to the center.

Due to a technical difficulty of some kind, the visitors' center that sat only hundreds of feet from a hydroelectric dam had no power.

How could something be so close to the power source, yet not be "plugged in"?

- More Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

We have the power to move the Gospel message forward, all we need to do is ask God to empower us and then walk by faith.

And lastly - ***DOUBTING GOD'S WORD!***

May we trust what God has said in His Word, may we heed the Words He has spoken to us, and then walk by faith empowered by the Spirit of God and turn this world right side up!

That is what we will see Gideon do, and his faith will be tested like ours. And for Gideon, he walked by faith and he saw the salvation that God brought to this battle! May we do the same!

Remember, and I will leave you with this, "**... 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the Lord of hosts.'**" Zechariah 4:6.