

## JUDGES 6

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Judges chapter 6 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

So far in our study in the book of Judges we have seen the apostasy in Israel and when they called out to God, He raised up a deliverer, a Judge to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression they were facing from their enemies, the ones that God raised up to come against them for their sin.

It was a cycle of sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, which starts the cycle all over once again with sin!

The Judges that God raised up to deliver Israel so far were Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar and Deborah.

Tonight, we will look at God raising up the fifth Judge, Gideon.

The children of Israel, because of their compromise, ended up turning from the Lord and served that which are not god's. They worshiped those things that the Gentile nations were worshiping.

Jeremiah speaks of this going on in his day, but it was already happening in Israel during the period of the Judges.

Jeremiah tells us, "**For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.**" Jeremiah 2:13.

Instead of taking in the pure, those refreshing, the living water that can only come from God, they were going after that which was not pure, that which was not refreshing, they were not taking in those life-giving waters!

Jeremiah says that what they believed in were like broken cisterns that couldn't hold water and even if they could, those waters were stagnant. Those waters were foul smelling. Those waters were full of bacteria and other organisms.

And as bad as this was, they were seeking after these things! They had turned from the fountain of living water, **YAHWEH** and turned to the polluted waters of this world!

As we read of these Judges and the other mighty men in the Scriptures, we need to understand that this is a work of God and God uses all those years of difficulty, tribulations in their lives to prepare them for the work that they were called to do. And God does the same with each of us.

Let me share this with you and then we will look at our study here in Judges this evening.

We are told,

Great men and women of God are not made in a moment. None of us is born one; we start with a gene package inherited from our parents, who were deeply flawed human beings like ourselves.

We also inherit an inborn sinfulness from them that has its ultimate source in Adam and Eve's rebellion against God at the dawn of human history.

This does not mean that we are absolved of responsibility for our own wrongdoing. When King David, struggling to come to terms with the enormity of his own moral failure, said, ***"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"*** (Psalm 51:5), he was not trying to shift the blame to his mother.

His particular sin was his own, but his vulnerability to it was something he shared with all other human beings. It was characteristic of the whole environment he was born into, where *“death reigned . . . even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam”* (Romans 5:14).

This was the world, and the Israel, that Gideon was part of.

And as we will see, there is nothing in either his family’s conduct or circumstances to suggest they were any better than others.

How can a man of God be fashioned from such beginnings?

- Barry G. Webb, *Judges and Ruth God in Chaos*, p.133

It is only by the grace of God and then a walk by faith trusting that where God is leading, He will bring forth victory.

But understand that Gideon was a fraidy cat! He was fearful and hiding from the enemy. And God is going to call him, and Gideon will have to learn to trust in what God is doing and then walk accordingly.

As we dig into Judges chapter 6 this evening, we once again see God’s people have moved away from God and they have fallen into sin.

Because of that God is going to judge them, not to destroy them but to get them to repent and return to Him.

With that said, let’s begin reading in Judges chapter 6, starting in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word!

**JUDGES 6****VERSE 1**

Keep in mind how Judges chapter 5 ended, **“So the land had rest for forty years.”**

Judges 5:31.

Now, after enjoying those forty years of peace and prosperity, it led them to complacency and apostasy and God oppressed them by the hand of the Midianites.

Remember that the Midianites were blood relatives, half-brothers to the children of Israel for Midian was the son of Abraham and his wife Keturah.

And now for seven years these Midianites oppressed the children of Israel, which may not sound like a long time, but when you look at what they were doing to the children of Israel, it was far too long!

Listen to the bondage that they brought upon the children of Israel in the next few verses. And as you listen to this, you may be wondering why it took them seven years to get right with God.

But think about our own lives or someone you know that has moved away from the Lord and all the trouble that they find themselves in, the bondage that they are in and year after year it goes on and they refuse to repent and get right with God. That was the children of Israel here!

**VERSES 2-6**

Keep in mind that the Midianites were a nomadic people, and they basically covered the area south of the Dead Sea and then over towards Gaza, which was located along the Mediterranean Sea.

Now because they didn't stay in a location long, being nomads, they didn't plant crops, but they would trade for what they needed.

But here they see a far better solution. They would wait for the children of Israel to harvest their crops that they planted and then they would swarm down upon them like locusts, stealing their crops. It was so bad that there was not even enough left over to feed their animals.

And these Midianites were a long-range threat as they traveled on camels, which could go as far as 100 miles per day!

Can you imagine working hard in the Spring to plant your garden and you care for it and it is now time for you to harvest your crop.

But, before you do, here comes your neighbor and he takes all your vegetables that you have planted and leaves you with nothing.

And in this picture, there is absolutely nothing you can do about it!

That is what was happening with the children of Israel year after year, and they were helpless as not only the Midianites came down upon them but also the Amalekites and the people of the east also saw this as a good way to get food without working for it!

But keep in mind that this was a judgment of God upon the children of Israel for their sin, their rebellion against Him.

One writer put it like this in regard to what sin does in our life. He wrote,

***Israel's sin made all their hard work profitless. All their produce and livestock were stolen after they worked hard to bring it to fruition. Sin does this; it robs us of what we work hard to gain. There are many accomplished men who lose everything in life because they won't stop their sin. All is lost in order to gain what, in retrospect, seems like nothing.***

- David Guzik, Judges 6

And that is what sin does in our own lives. You can work and work and, in the end, it profits nothing, you come up empty because there is no fruit from sin, lasting fruit that is.

But as you follow the Lord, He will provide what you need.

That is the point that Jesus makes in Matthew chapter 6, starting in verse 21, **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”** Matthew 6:21, 24-34.

That is a valuable lesson for us to learn and apply to our lives! God knows exactly what we need, and we need to be content in what God has given to us, provided for us.

Now let me ask you this question. *“Why did the children of Israel cry out to God?”*

It was not because of their sin but because of the oppression of the Midianites.

How do I know that they did not repent of their sin?

That is simple. God will send a prophet to rebuke them and if they truly repented of their sin, He would not have sent this prophet to do that!

### VERSES 7-10

Yes, they cried out to God because of the bondage that they were in. Can you imagine hiding in caves and strongholds in the mountains just to save some of the food you planted before the Midianites came in and stole it!

But they did not see their sin even though they are crying out to God for help, so God sends this prophet to them to let them know that they are in sin and need to repent and turn back to God!

Who is this prophet that God sent?

We don't know and the reality is, this is not the issue, God is!

Like this prophet we are servants of God, instruments used by God for His glory. It is not about us, but about the Lord. May we not forget that!

Let me give you this perspective because so often we praise the instrument that God is using instead of God!

Imagine your loved one goes in for a very delicate surgery. It is serious and the surgery takes hours.

Finally, the doctor comes out and tells you that the surgery went well and that your loved one is going to recover.

You don't say, "***Praise be to the scalpel that did this surgery!***"

No, you praise and thank the doctor because the scalpel was just the instrument that the doctor used to do the surgery.

And when we see a great work being done, we should not praise the instrument that God is using but we should praise and thank God!

As this prophet speaks, he reminds the children of Israel of the love of God and how He brought them out of their bondage in Egypt.

He reminds them of the power of God and how He not only delivered them from the Egyptians but from all those nations who oppressed them.

Then what is the problem here?

It is not God, it is never God, it was Israel for this prophet wants them to know the problem that God has with them, "**But you have not obeyed My voice.**"

They refused to obey God and now they can't figure out why this oppression has come upon them.

They blamed the Midianites but the reality was, it was their own sin that brought them in bondage and that is true in our own lives!

I don't think we are very different folks.

When we are oppressed, we tend to blame others for the mess we are in instead of examining our own hearts and repenting before the Lord!

The reality is this. Our actions, our behavior needs to reflect the one we love and the evidence for that is our obedience to Him.



Jesus said in John chapter 14, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”** John 14:15, 23-24.

It is our choice but if we love the Lord then we need to obey Him!

As we read on, we will see God raise up the fifth Judge in Israel, Gideon.

There is more spoken of this Judge than any other, some 100 verses and 3 chapters. The only one who comes close is Samson and there are 96 verses dealing with Samson, 4 chapters.

So let’s look at this man Gideon and see what we can learn from him.

#### VERSES 11-12

Here we see once again this phrase, **“the Angel of the Lord”** and I believe this is speaking of God, specifically the second person of the Holy Trinity, the pre-incarnate Christ.

Why do I say that?

First of all, in speaking of God the Father, John tells us, **“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”**

John 1:18.

Thus, if no man has seen God the Father and the Holy Spirit is without bodily form, this must be a Christophany or an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ!

Now some may argue that this could be just an angel, a messenger of God who is speaking to Gideon here.

I disagree and I am 100% certain this is Jesus.

Some of you might not agree with me and you may be shocked that I firmly believe this is a Christophany or an Old Testament appearance of the Word - Jesus!

That phrase is used of Jesus in the Old Testament as He appeared in bodily form, “**the Angel of the Lord.**”

And secondly, in Judges 6:14 we are told, “**Then the LORD turned to him and said, ‘Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?’**”

And in Judges 6:16 we are told, “**And the LORD said to him, ‘Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.’**”

In other words, it is *YAHWEH*, it is God, and thus, it must be Jesus that is speaking to Gideon here for “**LORD**” is in capitals and that means it is the name of God!

Now you might not think this is a funny story here, but to me, it is hilarious!

Let me show you what I mean.

Let me give you a picture of what is taking place here.

The Lord comes and sits down under a tree, relaxed, no anxiety, no fear.

And here is Gideon threshing wheat in the winepress.

I know, that sounds strange, threshing wheat in a wine press. Why was he doing that?

Because he was afraid that as soon as he finished threshing his wheat, if he did this high up on the threshing floor, the enemy would see it and come and take it away from him.

Thus, he is in the winepress, usually a low area and he was trying to thresh the wheat in an area where there was usually no wind, hiding from the enemy.

You see, the wind would blow the chaff away and the heavier wheat would fall to the ground.

So imagine poor Gideon trying to thresh this wheat with no wind, maybe he threw it up in the air and then tried to blow the chaff away.

And Gideon was not relaxed, he was anxious, he was fearful.

It is at this point, this scared, frightened man hears the Lord speak and say, “**The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!**”

I’m sure at this point Gideon turned to see who this person was talking to, it couldn’t be him, could it?

That is funny to me.

Now here’s the thing. What did God see that Gideon didn’t see?

The Lord saw the potential that was in Gideon.

That should encourage us because we too are like Gideon in many ways and yet God uses the weak things of this world to do mighty things through, as we will see.

### VERSE 13

Notice who Gideon blames for this mess they are in, **GOD!**

Yes, he heard of all the miracles that God did in the past, but Gideon is saying, “***What is going on, is God on vacation or what? Did God forget about us? What in the world is going on, look at this mess we are in! Let’s see some miracles now!***”

Here’s the thing. God is not the problem, but the problem is that the children of Israel had turned away from God.

Thus, God brought judgment upon them to open their eyes and draw them back to Him!

What is interesting as we read on is that God is not going to argue with Gideon, but He will challenge the faith of Gideon!

VERSE 14

The Lord is telling Gideon, ***“If you want to see Me work a miracle, you go forth and deliver Israel from the Midianites. Don’t worry, I am with you!”***

Now, if Gideon saw how this would all play out, this would be easy to just step out and walk.

Isn’t that true in our own lives. Things happen, difficult situations, God calls us to do something and there is no way, from a human perspective this is going to work out. But God has called you and the question is, ***“Are you willing to walk by faith even though you don’t know how this will all play out?”***

Notice what the Lord tells Gideon, **“Have I not sent you?”** That should be enough to dissolve not only Gideon’s doubts, but ours as well!

Make no mistake about it, if God sends us, He’ll see us through! Remember, where God guides, He provides! Not only that, when God calls us, He will equip us to do the work!

Remember what we are told in I Thessalonians 5:24, **“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

May we not forget that!

For Gideon, the problem was he knew the strength of the Midianites and he knew his weakness, and thus, just listen to the response of Gideon to the Lord, what the Lord told him, that he would have victory, and yet . . .

VERSE 15

First of all, Gideon calls out God and said that he isn’t seeing God working and delivering them from this bondage.

Then, God calls Gideon to go and defeat the Midianites, see the miracles that God can do through him, and Gideon basically says, ***“I can’t do that!”***

You see, instead of trusting in the Lord, Gideon looked at his qualifications to complete this task and he came up short!

And here’s the thing. Don’t you think God knew Gideon’s family, that his clan was the least in this tribe and that Gideon himself was the low man on the totem pole even in his own family?

Of course God knew these things. God is not looking for powerful people but people who love Him and are available for Him to use.

We are told in II Chronicles 16:9, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . . .”**

God wants to show Himself strong as He works through us and not the other way around! We don’t get the glory for the work that He has done!

What do we do when God calls us to take a step of faith?

***“Are you sure Lord?”***

***“I can’t do that?”***

When our faith gets put to the test, we are we full of excuses?

We come up with all kinds of reasons why we can’t do something, and the Lord tells us, **“Have I not sent you?”**

Folk’s, if God has sent you then you can be assured that the work will be accomplished, not in your strength, but His!

VERSE 16

The key to victory was not going to be found in Gideon but the Lord who would work through Gideon.

We tend to say, ***“If I only had more self-confidence, then I could accomplish this task.”***

We don’t need more self-confidence we need more God-confidence. We need to trust what He says to us and walk by faith because we know what God has promised us and that He is more than able to bring it to pass!

You see, when God sends us for a work, He is with us in that work – don’t forget that!

Think about it like this. God’s job is to work the miracle. Our part is to trust God and obey His Word.

VERSES 17-21

Gideon’s faith was so weak he was always asking for a sign – something tangible, visible as confirmation.

You see, for Gideon, the Words of God are not enough and thus, he wants a sign to confirm that this was of the Lord.

So Gideon prepares a burnt offering (the goat), a peace offering (the unleavened bread), and a drink offering (the broth), for the Lord.

And understand that this was a long process; he did not run out to the local Piggly Wiggly and pick up a slab of goat, some bread and a drink.

He had to prepare all of this.

And as he brings this before the Lord, the Lord touches it with the end of his staff and the sacrifice is consumed in the fire! And then the Lord departed!

What more could Gideon ask for, this was a spectacular sign and along with all he had heard, this must be the Lord.

I am sure Gideon is ready to go forward and deliver the children of Israel from the oppression that the Midianites have brought upon them.

Well, not exactly as we shall see!

Before we move on let me say this. For us, we have the Word of God and the Spirit of God to guide us in all that we do.

Thus, we need to trust God's Word and be sensitive to His voice as He speaks to our hearts and then believe what He is telling us and walk by faith!

#### VERSES 22-24

You have to love Gideon.

***“Lord, give me a sign so that I know it is You and You have called me to do this work!”***

And what does the Lord do, He gives Gideon this sign and now Gideon says, ***“It is the Lord and I have seen Him. I’m dead meat! How can I see God and live?”***

***“Gideon, Gideon, God called you to a work and you wanted a sign, and He gave it to you and now you think He is going to kill you, come on! God is not going to destroy you; you have a wrong perspective of God!”***

Because of that the Lord tells him, **“Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.”**

And it is out of that we see Gideon worship the Lord; he worships the God of peace.

In fact, Gideon recognizes that God is the one who not only brings peace to his life but the life of the nation.

He truly is our peace!

In this life we are living, we can be anxious, fearful, without peace and that is not what God wants for us.

In John 16:33 Jesus tells us, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

And in John 14:27 Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

Yes, we will have tribulation in this world, that is a given. But we can enjoy peace in Christ, peace through the storms of life as we look to Him.

He can be, **“the-Lord-Is-Peace”** to us if we look to Him!

And yes, if we were to approach God according to the Law, we would be toast. But we approach His throne of grace, and we don't need to fear Him! (Hebrews 4:16)

As we read on, we will see God encourage Gideon to walk by faith and take a stand for the living God.

Look at what the Lord calls Gideon to do!

### VERSES 25-26

Notice what the children of Israel were doing here. This community was worshiping Baal alongside the true and living God!

But it is even worse for Gideon. Notice what it says about Gideon's father, he built an altar to Baal! His family were idolaters!

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 Baal!



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?

#### VERSE 27

I don't think that Gideon lacked faith because he took ten men with him. You see, cutting down this wooden image, destroying this altar to Baal was a huge task and he needed help.

Also, it says that he came at night because he was fearful.

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, 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!

Keep in mind that this idol of Baal was something that his father set up! So he was also coming against his father here but to obey the Lord was more important to Gideon!

#### VERSES 28-30

Make no mistake about it, things were heating up as their idol was destroyed. What is sad here is when you see the response of the people, what they were upset about, it shows how sad and tragic this was.

We are told that when the men of the city woke up, ready to go and worship Baal and to sacrifice to this pagan god, they found everything destroyed and they were outraged.

They wanted to know who did this to their god and when they found out who did this, and they found out it was Gideon, and it seemed an easy thing for them to do, they called for Joash to bring out his son Gideon so that he could be put to death for his actions, for destroying their place of worship to the god Baal!

Why would Israel worship this false god, Baal? What made them turn from the living God?

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“They all felt an interest in the continuance of rites in which they had often many sensual gratifications. Baal and Ashtaroth would have more worshippers than the true God, because their rites were more adapted to the fallen nature of man.”* (Clarke)

And that is still true today. The false gods that people worship appeal to the flesh, to the fallen nature of man.

Listen to this and hopefully it awakens us to what is happening out there. We are told,

There are many false gods in this world today fighting for the attention of our children.

We have the false gods of entertainment, pleasure, fame, money, power, selfishness and instant gratification.

There are many influencers, some in high places, who make a living promoting the attitudes and behaviors that lead our children away from Christ to these false gods. This requires us to be careful with the precious time that we have with our children.

A false god has no demand for righteousness and seeks only one thing; obedience.

I notice that everywhere that I go, I see children engaged in their favorite app or watching the latest, greatest You Tube clip or staring at their favorite cartoon character on a tablet or cell phone. When the cartoon is over, the countenance on the face of the youngest of the children is sadness and anger and they let out a roar to signal to their parent or guardian that I need more.

When the You Tube video is over, the quest for the next latest and greatest, funniest, wildest, anything may go video begins.

Many times it is a video that celebrates behavior that is not always appropriate, at times even shocking, by someone out there who loves the attention that their videos may receive.

I often see the child who is lost in a game with an expression that shows no emotion nor do they respond to anything that we say to them at least not the first time. It is as if they are comatose, paralyzed by the task dictated to them by the little screen that they hold in their hand, as they are obediently pressing buttons.

- <https://bit.ly/4boXAnd>

And not only children but adults as well become engrossed in these idols that are out there. May we be as passionate for the Lord as they are for these worthless idols!

So these men who are so upset with what Gideon did, tell his father, Joash, to bring out Gideon because they wanted to, in a sense sacrifice him, they were going to put him to death!

What was Joash going to do?

Let's read on and see!

VERSES 31-32

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 of the Covenant 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.”**

It is sad the things that people worship that are of no help to them, not at all.

We serve the true and living God who is a help to us.

And here’s the thing. Our God does not need anyone to defend Him. Our God can defend Himself.

But not so for these false god’s, they needed someone to defend them, to carry them, to move them!

Let me share this story with you to show you the foolishness of idols.

It was during a time of revival back in the 19th Century in the South Seas.

The tribal chief came to know the Lord, he became a Christian and thus, he could not have all these idols around.

So he gathered them up, all the idols that the people had in his village. Then he told the idols that he was going to destroy them, but he did give them a chance.

He told them that if anyone of them could run away, they were free to go.

Guess what?

He destroyed all the idols that just sat there like dumb statues, he destroyed them all because none were able to run away, none were able to help or defend themselves!

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

Or as Trapp writes, ***“A man against whom Baal is to strive and contend; a title of honour.”***

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!

### VERSES 33-35

Keep in mind that it is harvest time, that is why the Midianites and Amalekites were coming down upon them, to take the produce of the land!

The children of Israel did all the work and now the Midianites and these other nations are gathering together to raid the land, take the food that the children of Israel have harvested.

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!

Let me ask you this. What is going to be the secret of Gideon winning this battle?

He is going to be empowered by the Holy Spirit!

In the Old Testament we see that 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.”**

Notice the focus here. It is not about us, but about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is talking to his disciples, the ones He spent three years working with, walking with, and teaching them.

You see, these men had all the tools to fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

Then what is the problem?

The problem was they lacked the power to run those tools and now Jesus is promising to give them that power by pouring out upon them the Holy Spirit.

We have seen when we were in the Gospel of John that the Holy Spirit comes alongside a person; He is *with* them, *PARA* in the Greek, drawing them to Jesus.

Once a person comes to Jesus the Holy Spirit comes *in* them, *EN* in the Greek.

Now, here in Acts we see the third Greek preposition used for the Holy Spirit, *EPI* or *upon* them empowering them for the work.

What will happen in our life when this takes place?

We will become witnesses of Jesus, not a command but a simple fact. Jesus said **“... you shall be witnesses of Me ...”** That is what will flow from your life as you live for Him! The Gospel message will go forward as you are empowered by the Spirit of God!

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!

Now let me also say this. As you look at the work of the Holy Spirit today, or should I say what some people call the work of the Holy Spirit, you see them tooting their horn, all kinds of bizarre behavior.

That is not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Think of it like this.

The steam in a locomotive does not exist to toot the whistle but to power the engine down the track, to move it along.

What’s my point?

My point is this. The Holy Spirit does that with us, moving us along for God to use, not to toot our whistle or blow our horn, but to move us forward with the Gospel message!

Also notice that it 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. And it continues on today!



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. That is what Gideon was doing!

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.

I think you get the idea.

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!

Now when Gideon blows the trumpet, according to Judges 7:3, 32,000 men gathered around Gideon to do battle against the enemy.

You may be thinking that this is great, but the odds are not great. It was Israel 32,000 against the enemy, 135,000. But they are better than 1 against 135,000!

So Gideon is now ready to fight, right?

Well, not exactly.

Let's read on and see what he does now.

#### VERSES 36-40

I don't believe this fleece that Gideon asked of the Lord was for guidance in what he was to do but a confirmation of what he was to do.

But God had already told him what he was to do, He confirmed it, He told Gideon that the victory was his, but he was still unsure, and he asks the Lord just to make sure it wasn't a bad taco or something the night before!

This is a lack of faith on Gideon's part.

But here is this fleece that Gideon lays out.

First, if God is in this then the fleece of wool 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. This time make the ground wet and the fleece of wool dry.

And God did do that and as we will see next time, this seals it for Gideon, he is ready to fight, but God still has a few more things to do before they go into battle.

Here's the thing with a fleece or a sign or wonder. It will never be enough, and we see that here with Gideon.

Today, there are some Christians who put out a fleece to determine the will of God. The problem with that is I don't believe this is Scriptural.

Let me show you what I mean.

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 when we are to go, 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!

Sandy Adams shares this story with us regarding signs.

He wrote,

Gideon's fleece reminds me of a friend who was struggling with an issue in her life.

She decided she needed a sign from God, and that's how she prayed – until one day she was driving home in a thunderstorm when a huge gust of wind blew a medal sign off the front of a building.

The sign flew across the street, and rammed into her car. It was as if the Lord was saying, ***“You want a sign. I'll give you a sign.”***

From that moment on she decided to trust God and take Him at His Word.

- Sandy Adams, Judges 6

When you look at the faith of Gideon now and then down the road, you see his faith growing and that should be what is seen in our lives as well.

God is gracious and merciful with us.

And in the New Testament, we see what God thought about the faith of Gideon.

In Hebrews 11:32 we are told, **“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.”**

Gideon is in this chapter that is speaking of the great men of faith!

How can that be?

Because he did have some faith, not perfect faith, and God honored that and I also believe that God sees the end result. He puts aside our weaknesses, our failures and looks at the good we are doing for Him, not great things, but the little faith we have, and He honors that!

In fact, if you look at those that are spoken of in Hebrews chapter 11 from just an Old Testament perspective, you would never come to the conclusion that they would be in the Hall of Faith section! But they are!

Thus, don't beat yourself up for what you did or didn't do, for your lack of faith, learn the lesson and then walk as God is leading you because God sees the best in each of us, even if it is small!

Think about a young child who colors a picture and gives it to his mom. It is not perfect, he colored outside the lines, it is messy. What does the mom say?

***“That is a beautiful picture. You did a great job. Let me put it on the refrigerator so everyone can see it!”***

That is what our God does with our lives, in what we do. Not perfect but He loves our service to Him as He calls us, and we walk by faith!

Let us seek the Lord, be guided by His Spirit, directed according to His Word and see what God can do in us and through us for His glory as He did in the life of Gideon!

Next time in our study of Judges we will see God stretch the faith of Gideon as he prepares for battle against the Midianites!