

God's Superhero's – Gideon

A Brave Deliverer

Judges 6:12

Introduction

During the time of the Judges the people of Israel would come to the place where they could no longer tolerate their circumstances, so they would cry out to God for help. God would again and again come to their rescue and deliver them. It is a story we all can identify with.

This time Israel had enjoyed forty years of prosperity and once again they had become self sufficient and self centered. The people had returned to worshipping idols --the one thing that always seemed to be their final downfall. So God allows the Midianites to oppress Israel for seven years. The Midianites were very oppressive and confiscated the crops and herds and destroyed what they didn't take. The people hid in fear whenever they would come to pillage their villages. To demonstrate His compassion to save Israel, God chooses the least likely candidate to become their leader. His task is to defeat the armies of the Midianites. The story of Gideon demonstrates how God can take a person with very little faith and turn them into great faith warrior that overcomes oppressive circumstances.

In our lesson today we see Gideon questioning God about His compassion. He basically asks, "Where are You God? All I know about You is what I've heard through the hand me down legends of events that occurred years ago. But what have You done lately?"

Let's read our text today beginning with Judges Chapter 6 verse 1 (Read Text)

What a great story of bravery and deliverance. The forty years of rest that Israel enjoyed (Judges 5:31) after defeating the Canaanites eventually came to an end. Israel again began to do evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian. He wanted Israel to realize her sinful ways and turn back to serving Him as the one true God. But in order for Israel to experience God's deliverance, he needed to provide a deliverer. And this time he called upon a man named Gideon. But the deliverer must accept the call!

I. Accept the Call

The Angel of the LORD comes and sits under the terebinth tree. Gideon is threshed wheat in the winepress. This was not only difficult it was humiliating. Wheat needed to be threshed in open spaces where the wind could blow away the chaff. Wheat was not normally threshed in an enclosed area like a winepress. The Angel of the Lord interrupts Gideon's work to say, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Now that's a strange greeting considering the circumstances. I'm sure as far as Gideon was concerned it didn't seem like the LORD was with him at all and it certainly didn't seem

like he was a mighty man of valor. I imagine Gideon probably turned to see if the angel was speaking to someone else as if to say, "I know you can't possibly mean me!"

Gideon was a man struggling with his faith. He asks the question, "Where are all the miracles our fathers told us about?" Gideon had heard about the great miracles God had done in the past but he wondered why he hadn't seen these same great works in his day. The problem was Gideon thought God was the problem. He felt God had forsaken him. He hadn't made the connection yet that God wasn't the problem at all. The problem was with Gideon and with the nation of Israel as a whole. The truth was Israel had forsaken God - God had not forsaken Israel.

The LORD then turns to Gideon and says, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" What might are we talking about here? So many times we sell ourselves short because all we can only see are our shortcomings and fears and insecurities. We look at the outward appearance of things, but God looks inside us and know the kind of character and desire we have. Gideon had the might of the humility. He at least had the courage to be out there threshing wheat on the winepress floor. It may not have been much, but it did take some courage. Gideon was a person who was concerned about Israel's situation. In his heart he wanted to see the miracle of God. People who don't care don't complain like Gideon did. He knew and believed the stories of Israel's past. He knew God had done great things in the past. And he believed they were for real. Gideon not only believed in the supernatural, he also had a great spiritually desire. He wanted to see God do great works again. Gideon was willing to learn and get involved in God's plan. He was willing to listen to what the Angel of the LORD said. And even though he knew he was powerless to do anything to help the situation Gideon was willing to put his trust in God. He knew their only hope was divine intervention.

But when God calls Gideon he asks, How can I save Israel? Gideon's problem was that he could not see himself as someone who could do great things for God. He thought of himself as a nobody, from the smallest clan in his tribe, and that he was the least in his own family. Kind of, "Woe is me. I'm just a worm" mentality. But here's the secret to any great success for God. The angel of the Lord tells Gideon, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." God's assurance to Gideon was not to build up his self esteem, but to assure him that He would be with him. Gideon wasn't lacking in self-confidence, he needed to have confidence in God. It's important to know that God has called us and sent us but it is even greater to know that He is with us.

Once Gideon is convinced God is calling him and has promised to be with him, he accepts the call of God and says "yes" to the faith challenge before him. But before Israel can experience deliverance there are some issues that must be addressed. Personal preparation must be made in order for Israel to serve God. Before we can lead others to God's victory and deliverance, we have to experience it firsthand. We must prepare our own hearts to serve God.

II. Prepare to Serve

The LORD sends Gideon first as a prophet to Israel. Before Israel can accept Gideon as a judge, they first must prepare themselves to serve the lord. The Lord reminds them, "I brought you up from Egypt." To face this current crisis, Israel needed a reminder of what God did before. God also reminds them of His love for them. The God who loved them enough to deliver them from Egypt still loved them enough to deliver them from the Midianites. He also reminds them that He is not only powerful enough to deliver them from Egypt but that He was still powerful enough to deliver them from the Midianites.

Then He comes to the real issue. But you have not obeyed My voice. Israel had added worshipping Baal to their worship of Yahweh. Have you ever been guilty of that? So God says, tear down the altar of Baal that your father has. (Since in Gideon's community, Baal was being worshipped right alongside of Yahweh. So God called Gideon to get his own house in order first.) When was the last time God told you to get rid of your idols? Gideon does it by night probably because he lacked the courage to do it in the daytime. But any effort at obedience is better than to not obey the Lord at all.

The real problem, God says, isn't that the Midianites are so strong, it's that you have been so disobedient. Israel thought the problem was the Midianites but the real problem was in the hearts of the Israelites. It's human nature to try and blame others for the problems that we cause ourselves? But when Israel cried out to the LORD in repentance he stood ready to deliver them. Once you are willing to give up your miserable life and put your faith and trust in the real God there's hope for you. The false gods we create for ourselves always fail us when times get desperate. But it's during those desperate times in your life that you can expect to see God's divine intervention and victory. When your faith leads you to believe God really does care about you then you can begin to expect a victory. You start to believe that things will change!

III. Expect a Victory

So Gideon gathers an army and all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came to meet them.

"The Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon." That's the secret to every believer's success in life. It's a familiar pattern of the Spirit's work upon many men and women throughout the scriptures. And the Holy Spirit still comes upon believers today. According to the New Covenant in Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:17-18).

The question is, do you continually try to face your battles and struggles with only natural strength and wisdom or do you trust and rely upon the supernatural wisdom and guidance of God's Spirit to help you? Once Gideon recognizes the Spirit's power, he's ready to blow the trumpet and take on the conflict. It's not enough just to say, Yes I believe God can deliver. Active faith requires us to proclaim that power and announce God's victory – even before we've engaged in battle. That's the true nature of faith. And that's the assurance of deliverance and victory God wants us to experience in our lives.

With God's help, Gideon was able to gather an impressive number of troops on short notice. The people were looking for a leader! Judges 7:3 tells us that 32,000 men came to follow him into battle. But God tells Gideon, "You have too many people for me." Now comes the great test of Gideon's faith. His army of 32,000 men was already outmatched by 135,000 Midianites. Yet God thought his army was too large, and so He commands Gideon to allow all who were afraid to go home (which left him with only 10,000 men).

God thought Gideon's army was too large "Lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying "My own hand has saved me." Israel could still take credit for a victory if they had 32,000 troops. They could believe they were underdogs who triumphed through their own great bravery or strategy. God wanted the odds so great that the victory would clearly be His alone. So God whittles Gideon's army down to 300 men. But he assures Gideon that victory is certain. Now the Israeli army was less than 1% of its original size which means there was about 400 Midianite soldiers to each Israeli soldier. The only hope Gideon had now was to trust in God because there was nothing else left to trust in.

Conclusion

The Midianite soldiers awoke to an explosion of crashing pitchers, and burning torch lights, and movement coming down upon them from all directions. No wonder they thought they were being attacked by an army even bigger than they were. They probably thought that each torch represented a company of 1000 men!

And as Israel advanced on the Midianites they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" The Midianites were already afraid of the sword of Gideon (Judges 7:14), and all the shouting helped to send them into panic. If the Midianites did not know who Israel's God was, they certainly knew there was a warrior from the LORD named Gideon. And the bible says, The LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp.

The Midianites fought themselves. Israel got the spoils of the victory that God won. God blessed the efforts of Gideon and the people of Ephraim that day, and they experienced success and victory against their enemy. And God wants you to experience that same kind of success too!

Bibliography

Cundall, Arthur, and Leon Morris. Judges and Ruth. Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968

Lewis, Arthur. Judges/Ruth. Chicago: Moody Press, 1979

Wilson, Ralph F. "Introduction to Gideon and the Period of the Judges". Aug. 1998. Jesus Walk Bible Study Series. 1985-2009. <<http://www.jesuswalk.com/gideon/0-gideon-intro.htm>>