

God's Call
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Introduction- There is a pattern that takes place throughout the book of Judges. God's people, the Israelites serve God and they are blessed, then they begin to sin and break the commandments that were handed down from God through Moses.

In Deuteronomy God made a covenant with the Israelites

Deuteronomy 11:26-29 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

When they begin to worship other gods, God allows the nations around them to attack them and the blessing turns to the curse.

The Israelites cry out to God and he sends a "Judge" to deliver them.

The enemies are defeated and the people fall back into sin as they grow comfortable. The book of Judges can be summarized by this one verse

Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

We often see this pattern played out in the lives of believers. Those who have trusted Christ as their savior, live in God's will for a time and seem to experience the blessings of God, but then begin to pull away.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness they are either "drawn away of their own lusts" as the Bible says or they suffer a little persecution or go through some trial and begin to look back at the things that they had in Egypt which is a type of the world and they think life was better back then.

As they step away from the things of God and step off into sin, they begin to put other things before God, they lose fellowship with him and suffer the consequences of that sin. After a while the believer may realize that the pleasures of sin are only for a season and that those trials were to help him grow and he cries out to God.

We see this pattern playing out in Judges chapter 6

Judges 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

Judges 6:2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

Judges 6:3 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

Judges 6:4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

Judges 6:5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

Judges 6:6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

When they cried out to the Lord, he sent a preacher to point out their error.

Judges 6:7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

Judges 6:8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

Judges 6:9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

Judges 6:10 And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

It is in the context of this passage that God call's a young man named Gideon to service.

We will not only see God's Commission to Service for Gideon, We will also see God's Command to obedience, and finally we will see God's Comfort and reassurance to His servant.

I. God's Calling

Judges 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

Judges 6:12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

Judges 6:13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

Judges 6:15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

Judges 6:16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Notice a few things with me if you will.

A. **Gideon was humbled:**

Gideon is hiding out by the wine press in order to thresh wheat. He is beating the wheat in order to get it to release the grains so that he can use them. This would normally be done in the open but the Midianites were constantly destroying food and livestock.

Because of the sin, because the children of Israel were worshipping other God's, they were impoverished as verse 6 tells us.

Judges 6:6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

Gideon had suffered right along with everyone else. He had probably been hard at work and the fruits of his labors were stolen or destroyed many times over and because of this, he didn't quit or give up but he was forced to hide by the winepress so he could get a little wheat so that he could make bread.

When the angel comes along and calls him a "mighty man of valour" and tells him that "he shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites" as he hides behind the winepress that is probably the furthest thing from his mind.

He responds to the Angel with humility in verse 15

Judges 6:15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

The Lord responds in verse 16

Judges 6:16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called. The Lord said "I will be with you and not only will you defeat the Midianites but its going to seem as if you did it by yourself.

Paul points this principle out.

1 Corinthians 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

1 Corinthians 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

1 Corinthians 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence..

When God calls someone to service he doesn't want someone who is lifted up in their own pride. The person that God can use most is often the one who has come to the end of themselves like the prodigal son. When the prodigal son demanded his inheritance he had big plans, he had great ideas for how things were to be done. It wasn't until his resources ran out, his ingenuity failed him and he saw the uselessness of the life he had chosen that he turned to God. Man has a tendency toward pride and God will allow circumstances in our lives that will humble us. He will allow us to come to the end of ourselves.

If there was any pride in Gideon before we don't know, but at this moment, there was only humility and self-doubt.

Notice also that

- B. Gideon had a desire for the things of God

Judges 6:13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

Gideon knew the history of the Israelites and he was longing for the days when God performed miracles in their midst.

It was heart breaking for him to see God's people suffering.

Sin had cost them a loss of fellowship with God. They no longer saw God work miracles.

The believer who has gotten away from God often looks back and longs for the day when they had confidence in God. They long for a day when God seemed to be working all around them.

The day when prayers were answered.

But a lot of people don't realize the cost of sin. If you've placed your trust in the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed as payment for your sins, you have eternal life but your sin will cost you.

Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

Next let's look at God's Command to Gideon

II. God's Command

Judges 6:25 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:

Judges 6:26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

A. Tear down the Altar

God's command's Gideon to tear down the altar that his father built to Baal and to cut down the Grove of trees next to it.

These were the things used to worship Baal. This was the sin that was breaking fellowship with God and in order for God to use Gideon he gave him a command tear it down.

We may not build actual altars to worship Baal but what things do we put before God?

What is it that overrides our worship of the God of all creation.

Exodus 20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

There are many altars that we worship at.

1. Worship of Money
 - a. It's not evil to have money or wealth. Being poor doesn't make you spiritual. The world often misquotes the Bible on this verse

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is the l-o-v-e of money that is the root of all evil. It is the love of money that pulls people away from serving God. It is the love of money that makes it so easy for people to fall prey to the prosperity gospel. "Just plant a seed, give

the last of your money and God will multiply it 100 times over”

It is the love of money that will cause you to begin missing church in order to pursue that larger paycheck.

2. We Worship at the altar of Self

When we care more about ourselves than we do about God then anything goes. I can create a God that's just the way I want him.

People say well, “I just don't believe a loving God” They don't look for what the Bible says,

James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

God has to fit into their world view, they refuse to change their world view to fit Gods.

Church has to meet their needs. Everything becomes subjective. The worldly Christian wants a church that caters to their felt needs and there are plenty of churches out there to give them what they want.

They begin judging the softness of the seats, does the music feed their flesh just the way they like it and is there plenty of activity instead of listening for God to show them where they fall short.

2 Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 Timothy 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2 Timothy 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

2 Timothy 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Paul told his young protégé Timothy in a sense to tear down those altars and cut down those groves when he said

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but

after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

2 Timothy 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Here's a quick check to see how much you put yourself above everything and everyone else. When someone turns their blinker on to come into your lane how do you react. Do you speed up or do you back off to give them room?

B. He had to Lay it on God's Altar

Judges 6:26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

Gideon had to take the wood from the cut down trees and use them on God's altar to burn the bullock which had been used to tear down the altar of Baal.

Spiritually we can tear down those other altars in our lives and bring them to God's altar.

When God is speaking to your heart. God convicts you of things in your lives that are getting in between you and him. Things that

are causing a loss of fellowship with him. You can offer sacrifices to him.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

If we want to restore our fellowship with him, we need to put aside our pride and sin.

James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

James 4:9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Gideon was afraid

Judges 6:27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.

We are afraid

What you guys call an old fashioned church meeting is what I call worship.

People that are gathered to hear the word of God preached. They come to church not for the activities, the bookstores or the concerts but they come to church to hear the preaching and they come ready to hear a word “fitly spoken that is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” As Proverbs 25:11.

The “old fashioned altar call” where mothers come to pray for children. Where fathers pray for strength and where sinners pray for forgiveness is available to you every Sunday right here.

You don't have to bring an animal to be sacrificed for your sins.
You don't have to shed the blood of an innocent being in order to enter into the holiest of holies because Jesus shed his blood once and for all sins.

Hebrews 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

There are no usage rates, there are no data plans. There is a direct line of communication between you and your heavenly father. Your plan won't expire because we have the perfect high priest.

Hebrews 7:24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Hebrews 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Hebrews 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

We're Often afraid to use the altar to pour out our hearts.

Because preachers of the past have abused the altar call by using it as a scorecard,
Preachers today are afraid of generating false conviction

When God moves on your heart you may be afraid that your just making a show.

If everyone else is getting their heart right, whether it be down at the altar or there in pew, then the person who is going down strictly for "show" is wasting their time. In fact, they may be helping someone else to feel less intimidated about tearing down their own altars and laying them on God's altar.

We try to post things online that make us look more spiritual. We post verses and puppy dog slides.

But we put up a fight when Spirit is moving.

The fact is that most of our objections come from pride.

We post everything about ourselves from pictures of the food we're about to eat, to notices of friendship betrayals, but

When it comes to declaring the reason for the hope that is within us we think that our relationship with God is a private thing.

Tear down those altars of pride and selfishness, quit singing I surrender some and learn how to sing I surrender all.

Gideon pushed past his fear and obeyed God and God used him to defeat the Midianites, and the Amelikites, and the children of he east with 300 men.

If you feel God has called you into the ministry or to service at one time and you wonder why you haven't been used. You may have left the altars standing.

III. God's Comfort

Gideon continued to want reassurances from God.

Even though an army of over 32,000 men had gathered behind him, he didn't think that gain was a form of Godliness. He wanted that assurance that God was with him.

Judges 6:36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

Judges 6:37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

Judges 6:38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

Judges 6:39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

Some might be high minded and charge him with a lack of faith and that he was tempting the Lord

But I think Gideon was beaten down and he had gone a long time without seeing God work in his life

The sin had separated him from God and the devil in the form of the Midianites had beaten him down and filled him with self-doubt.

It wasn't a lack of faith in God, it was a lack of faith in himself.

A man brought his son to Jesus once. His son was possessed and would foam at the mouth and gnash with his teeth and cast himself into the fire and into the water. He had watched his son suffer over and over again from the time that he was a child.

He heard of this man named Jesus that could heal and perform miracles but he only met the disciples and they couldn't heal him.

Then he met Jesus and presented his son to him.

He told Jesus if you can do anything have compassion on us.

Jesus said

Mark 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

I think in that split second, the man's mind raced through the past, the sleepless nights, the useless doctors, the mocking people and the misguided friends and then he looked at his suffering son and turned to Jesus

Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

I think that's what Gideon was saying, Lord I believe. Help thou mine unbelief.