

## JUDGES 6

### GIDEON: A WEAK MAN WITH A GREAT GOD



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All emphasis added are mine

## HERE WE GO AGAIN...

- Judges 6:1-6 *The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number--both they and their camels could not be counted--so that they laid waste the land as they came in. 6 And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.*
  - 5:31b – ...*And the land had rest for forty years.*
  - *v6 And Israel was brought very low...* – famine conditions, living in the mountains and in caves.
  - *v6...And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.* – no sign of repentance, no sign of recognition that their disobedience had led to the situation they are in.

## OFTEN GOD'S HELP DOESN'T LOOK LIKE WE PLANNED

- Judges 6:7-10 *When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage. 9 And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 And I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear [reverence – as to worship] the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.' But you have not obeyed my voice."*
  - The people cry out for a deliverer, but God sends them a prophet.
  - God is more concerned about the holiness of His people than their worldly comfort.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – a reminder – *..I delivered you...*
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> – an accusation -*...you have not obeyed my voice.*

## COVENANT CURSES

- Deuteronomy 6:1-7 *"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear [reverence – as to worship] the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*
  - The parents (and the Levites and priests) had failed in their responsibility.
  - Israel should have clearly seen the circumstances they were in as a fulfillment of the covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28.

## COVENANT CURSES

- Deuteronomy 28:15 *"But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you..."*
- Excerpts from Deuteronomy 28:29b-33 *and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. 30 ...You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit. 31 Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat any of it. Your donkey shall be seized before your face, but shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, but there shall be no one to help you. ... 33 A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually,*
- Their problem wasn't that God hadn't heard their voices, it was that they had not been listening to His.
- Judges 6:10 leaves us anticipating judgement rather than deliverance

## A WEAK MAN AND A GREAT GOD

- Judges 6:11-18 *Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." 13 And Gideon said to him, "Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" 15 And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." 16 And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man." 17 And he said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay till you return."*
- The people of Israel had begun to think that their relationship to God was something that was inherited.
- Gideon's response is reminiscent of Moses in Exodus 4 – "I am slow of speech...please send someone else"

## THE FEAR OF THE LORD

Judges 6:19-24 *So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. 20 And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them." And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. 22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.*

- Offering is based upon his own wisdom/experience.
- Offering is very sacrificial.
- Instead of calming Gideon's fears, the encounter with the angel of the LORD terrifies him even more.
- The LORD gives three words of encouragement - *Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die*

## REFORMATION STARTS AT HOME

*Judges 6:25-27 That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down." 27 So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.*

- Before God would use Gideon to deliver Israel from the enemies from without, he had to deliver his household from the enemies within.
- Idolatry – treasuring something in that moment more than we treasure God.
- Examples of idols today:
  - Acceptance or approval
  - Achievement
  - Comfort
  - Children
- Don't just tear down the idols, but put on godliness (Ephesians 4)
- The point is not Gideon's weak faith, but the patience and power of God.



## WILL YOU CONTEND FOR BAAL?

Judges 6:28-32 *When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. 29 And they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And after they had searched and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." 30 Then the men of the town said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it." 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down." 32 Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he broke down his altar.*

- The irony is that these men calling for a death sentence against Gideon stand condemned by God's word.
- Chapter 8 – Gideon makes an ephod and Israel, including Gideon's family fall back into false worship. We must always be reforming.
- v32 – *Jerubbaal- "Let Baal contend against him"*

## THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CLOTHES GIDEON

*Judges 6:33-35 Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him. And he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they went up to meet them.*

## DON'T LAY OUT YOUR FLEECE

Judges 6:36-40 *Then Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said, 37 behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said." 38 And it was so. When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew." 40 And God did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.*

- Mark 9:24 *Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"*
- This text is usually seen as a guide for determining the will of God.
- v36 & 40 – *as you have said* – Gideon knew what God had commanded.
- God graciously condescends and responds to Gideon's tests.
- Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

## BIBLICAL DECISION MAKING

- Continually have a humble, yielded, and dependent will before God seeking to discern His will in the situation (Rom. 12:1-2).
- Recognize that Scripture is inspired by God and equips us for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Continually pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5).
- Gather all the facts (Prov. 18:13).
- Study any direct commands in Scripture concerning this particular issue (2 Tim. 2:15). Obey where Scripture is clear (1 John 5:3).
- Study any indirect principles/statements in Scripture concerning this issue (2 Tim. 2:15). Obey where the principles clearly address your situation (1 John 5:3).

## BIBLICAL DECISION MAKING

- Weigh the purposeful use of freedom/liberty (Gal. 5:13; 1 Cor. 8).
  - Is there anything wrong with this activity? Is it lawful (1 Cor. 10:23)
  - Is it self-serving at the expense of someone else's benefit? (Rom. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:33; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:1-4)
  - Is this something I can thank God for? (Rom. 14:6; 1 Cor. 10:30; Col. 3:17, 1 Thess. 5:18)
  - Is this something that will glorify God? (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 5:9)
  - Is this worth imitating? (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9)
  - Is this following the example of Christ? (Rom. 15:7-8; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 John 2:6)
  - Will my choice affect others around me? If so, in what way?
  - Is it helpful and does it build up (1 Cor. 10:23)? Does it promote my spiritual life?
  - Is it a practice that over time will tend to master me? Will it stimulate a desire that will be difficult to control? (1 Cor. 6:12)
  - Is it constructive? Will it promote the spiritual well-being of other believers if they engage in this practice that is permissible for me?" —Jerry Bridges (*The Discipline of Grace*, 213)
- Affirm that your desires are God-honoring (Ps. 37:4).
  - What do I want to do? Will it bring glory to God? (1 Cor. 10:31)
  - Is this an occasion where my "flesh" (sinfulness) is seeking to indulge itself? (Gal. 5:13)
- Seek counsel from others (Prov. 11:14, 18:1)

\*Adapted from the teaching of Dr. Stuart W. Scott\*

## I WILL BE WITH YOU...

Judges 6:12 *And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."*

Judges 6:16 *And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you..."*

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*