

Gideon's Sword, Gideon's Fleece, Gideon's Faith – Judges 7:19-22

I. Introduction:

- A. Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and Gideon fit the battle of the Jezreel Valley.
1. The Biblical account of Gideon and the fleece, followed by his epic battle against the Midianites, will always be a favorite with Sunday School children.
 2. It has all the elements for a memorable story: the bully defeated by the under dog; the whittling down of Gideon's army to a mere 300 men to fight against thousands; and swords made of trumpets and lamps.
 3. It has eye appeal and ear appeal, appealing to young minds.
 4. But it should also be used to touch mature, adult hearts with several epic lessons.
- B. I hope these messages on faith are not becoming redundant.
1. I know, and admit, there is some repetition, because, in truth, these principles aren't complicated.
 2. There aren't a lot of variables to the equation of victory through faith.
 3. Essentially, we see people in need, and then when certain conditions are met, God steps in to bless.
 4. But as we look at Noah, or Abraham, Joshua or Gideon, we see similar things from different perspectives.
 5. And those perspectives are important, because until God comes into our lives the way He did with those people, we are still in need of these lessons.
- C. In regard to Gideon, let's consider the **need** of faith, the **leader** and the **weakness** of faith, then the **victory** of faith.

II. First, we begin, as we have several times, with the **NEED** of faith.

- A. But here is a lesson you've not yet seen: our need of faith often comes incognito – it comes in disguise.
1. **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.”**
 - a. We need faith, because we need God's blessings.
 - b. We need God's blessings because we have problems.
 - c. And at least seven times out of ten, we have those problems because of our own sins.
 - d. Over and over again in the book of Judges we read the words, **“and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”** That is a very serious problem.
 2. In this case, we aren't specifically told, but the sin of Israel appears to have been some sort of idolatry.
 3. The people were becoming more and more like the idolaters around them. They were becoming **“worldly.”**
 4. So God – Israel's God – brought several enemy nations into the land to plunder and destroy the things of the people of God.
 5. The Midianites and Amalekites filled the Promised Land like swarms of grasshoppers.
 6. There were so many of them, it may have been hard to determine who were God's people and who belonged to Baal.
 7. Isn't that a description of American Christianity today?
 8. The difference between the professing Christians and the Midianites is getting more and more difficult to distinguish, and it's not because the gradual improvement of general society.
- B. Last Wednesday, Brother Austin pointed out the spiritual poverty of Post Falls.
1. Ironically, the next day, Judy and I met our new family doctor, an attendee at the mega-church, Real Life, and she was saying how blessed Post Falls is because of all our great churches.
 2. That, my friends, is the problem with modern Christianity: we can't see our problems.
 3. Even the Lord's churches are starving; they have been robbed of God's power and blessing.
 - a. They are living off spiritual junk food. They are satisfied with mediocrity.
 - b. Yes, there are lots of leeches sucking the life out of good people and good churches.
 - c. We can blame society, government, the entertainment industry, drugs and whatever.
 4. But our spiritual poverty can't be put on anyone but ourselves.
 5. We need to see the hand of God, the power of God, the beauty of God, the glory of God.

- C. Earlier in **Judges 6**, the Lord graciously sent a prophet to point out the problem.
1. When the starving Israelites cried unto the Lord, he sent a man which said in God's name, *"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."*
 2. When will today's Christians admit that we do not dwell in a Christian country; this is Amorite territory.
 3. When will today's Christians stop fearing the secular gods of the land. The government for example.
 4. And how should we define that word *"fear?"* Does it mean to be afraid of what the government might do?
 5. Or does it mean *"worship and honour"* the gods in the government, as in *"thou shalt fear thy God; for I am the LORD your God" – Leviticus 25:17?*
- D. I wonder at what point during the seven years of that tribulation, God sent that prophet.
1. How many years of poverty and degradation passed before we come to **Judges 6:12?**
 2. Once again, I see God calling the nation – generally commanding them to repent, but nothing happened.
 3. They went on in their unbelief and idolatry until God set His sights on one man – one judge to save them.
 4. Revival will come to the nation through one individual. Who will it be?
- E. Eventually, *"the angel of the LORD appeared unto (Gideon), and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. 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."*
1. Until we recognize that we are spiritually poverty-stricken and in desperate need of God's blessings we will never realize our need of trust in the Lord.
 2. Perhaps Gideon was on his way to seeing the first need, but he was still blind to his need of faith.

III. And with that we come to consider this future man of FAITH.

- A. Gideon was as much a part of the problem as any other man in Israel.
1. He was from a family where the truth had been corrupted – the worship of Jehovah had been polluted by the idolatry of Baal.
 2. **Verse 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; and build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock."*
 3. Gideon and Israel had a form of godliness, but they lacked the power thereof, because they had poisoned the well with their sinfulness.
 4. If I can put it this way, they called themselves *"Christians,"* but they used the world and the traditions of men in their worship and service.
 5. Their worship music was Midianite, their Bibles were Midianite, their prayers were Midianite.
 6. Everything about their religion had become just like the world.
- B. So God called upon Gideon to bring Israel back from the brink of destruction.
1. But first Gideon himself had to be brought back.
 2. Of course, the Lord, in His omnipotence and sovereignty, has the ability to use anyone and any kind of person to bring about His will and His glory.
 3. For example, *"the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3)*, and yet God used him to revive the people of Israel.
 4. And **Joshua** didn't even possess the courage of Moses, yet the Lord used him.
 5. **Gideon** certainly wasn't the alpha dog in Israel.
 6. Like Joshua or Gideon, you might be the person God plans to use in bringing glory to His name in our city.
 - a. About the turn of the last century, it was a fourteen-year-old boy who grew up wanting to play professional soccer – football.
 - b. But the Lord had other plans, and that teenager, by faith, shook Scotland to its core by preaching repentance and faith.
 - c. God was glorified in that country through a heaven-sent revival ignited by a boy in short pants.

- C. Going back to Gideon, **verse 12** – *“And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”* *“Mighty man of valour?”* *“Mighty man of valour?”*
1. That Hebrew word is translated *“strength,” “power,”* and *“force”* but it’s most common translation is *“army.”*
 2. The Holy Spirit had earlier used that word to describe the people of Jericho – *“mighty men of valour.”*
 3. And what was this man of courage, strength and power doing when the angel of the Lord approached?
 4. He was hiding from the Midianites, trying to beat out a little grain to make a bit of food for his family.
 5. He was no *“mighty man of valour”* – **except** in the sight of the Almighty.
 6. Potentially, he was a leader of a victorious army. By faith he could be a *“mighty man of valour.”*
 7. The only thing holding back the Gideons of today is a lack of faith; a lack of willingness; a lack of surrender.

IV. Gideon’s faith at this point was weak – as **WEAK** as water.

- A. It was in need of some development.
1. **Verse 17** – *“If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.”*
 2. Gideon then ran off and prepared a small sacrifice.
 3. When it was prepared, the Angel touched it with the end of his staff, much like Moses’s rod, and
 - a. *“there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.*
 - b. *Then the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.*
 - c. *And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.*
 - d. *And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die.”*
- B. The more I study the great revivals of the Bible & of those in Christian history, the more I become like Gideon.
1. As much as I yearn to see our Israel delivered from our Midianite malaise, the more I tremble just a bit.
 2. I want to experience the presence of the Angel of God, but knowing how unworthy I am, deep down in my heart I fear contact with Him and with what might come thereafter.
 3. **But** this is exactly where we must begin. We **must** be like Gideon and like Joshua.
 4. *“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”*
- C. Gideon, seeing the miracle of the fire stiffened up and offered a couple of his father’s bullocks to the Lord.
1. And he tore down the neighborhood altar to Baal, and took a chain saw to the small grove of trees where that idolatrous altar was sitting.
 2. Those things gave a testimony to his whole community. But of course, they were not pleased.
 3. By nature, Gideon’s faith was still weak; it seemed to go up and then down, up and then down again.
 4. So he presented to the Lord his infamous test of the fleece.
 - a. **Verse 36** – *“Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,*
 - b. *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.*
 - c. *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.”*
- D. I know that we should have complete trust in God, believing every Word He speaks.
1. His word is good.
 - a. *“Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant” – I Kings 8:56.*
 - b. I know that we should instantly latch on to every promise and every word of the Lord.
 2. But I know how weak we are.
 3. The Lord is aware of our weakness, and yet He is so kind, so patient and gracious.
 4. He didn’t need to put up with Gideon, but thankfully He did.

5. *“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.”*
6. *And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.”*

V. At that point Gideon became fully committed, and God granted a **VICTORY** of faith.

- A. You know the history and what followed.
 1. Prior to the episode with the fleece, Gideon was able to rally a number of men from several of the northern tribes of Israel.
 2. But *“the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands.”*
 3. He ordered that anyone whose heart wasn't fully engaged; anyone who was fearful to return home.
 4. The potential deserters ran from the field, and the army fell from twenty-two thousand to ten thousand.
 5. But that was still too many for the Lord, so number was reduced to three hundred.
- B. And what was the reason for the great reduction in numbers?
 1. *“Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.”*
 2. I think I can say, without the least bit of pride, our church is a perfect size to route the Midianites.
 3. If the Lord chose to save a great number of people, or to stir this city for Christ, there is no way we could boast that it was because of our strength, our numbers, our wisdom, our programs or the beauty of our building.
 4. As Paul said in **First Corinthians**: *“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; 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: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”*
- C. The Lord used Gideon's three hundred men, in ways that were contrary to reason.
 1. They attacked with trumpets and oil lamps inside clay pitchers.
 2. They gave the appearance of a vast earthly army, when in fact they were only a small group of men doing the will of God from the heart.
 3. *“And the Lord set every (Midianite's) sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.”*
 4. **Verse 10** – *“There fell an (incredible) hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.”*
- D. God's name was magnified in Israel, and in fact throughout the world, through that victory which came about in part through the faith of Gideon.
 1. May God give us that faith. Pray for that kind of faith. Study that faith.
 2. Put yourself in a position to receive that kind of faith.
 3. It is the human key to great blessing and power of God.

VI. A footnote to the story might be described as the **JEALOUSY** of faith.

- A. **Judges 8:1** – *“And the men of Ephraim said unto (Gideon), Why hast thou served us thus, that thou callest us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianities? And they did chide with him sharply.”*
 1. Wisely, or perhaps providentially, Gideon didn't directly answer their question, but simply used their pride against them, calming what could have been a dangerous situation.
 2. *“Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the (whole) vintage of (my family and tribe)?”*
- B. Why wasn't Ephraim initially invited to fight against God's enemy?
 1. As the prophet Zechariah said to Zerubbabel, real spiritual victory does not come by might or by power, *“but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”*
 2. Ephraim was not fit to fight in any spiritual battle. Their tribe was full of itself, by its sheer size & strength.
 3. It was filled with tribal ego and the envy which instantly displayed itself after the battle was over.

- C. There will always be those professing Christians who want to feast on the spoils of God's revival, but who would never be willing to make the sacrifice necessary to be really useful to the Lord.
1. And if we want to be a part of that revival, then we must be willing to deny that we have been a part.
 2. If the Holy Spirit swept through Post Falls, we must be willing to let Him take 100% of the credit.
 3. If souls are saved, it will not be because of our evangelistic skills, even though we've had a number of Bible lessons on evangelism.
 4. And if the Lord revolutionizes the religious nature of Deer Park or Tri-cities or anywhere else, we must be willing to step back and praise His name alone.
 5. Don't be jealous of what the Lord does through that other man, and even more importantly don't be jealous of the Lord Himself.
- D. Earlier in **Judges 6** Gideon couldn't believe that the Lord would call him a *"mighty man of valour."*
1. And then the Lord said, *"Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites."*
 2. This was still impossible for Gideon to believe.
 3. But then, *"the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, & thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."*
 4. It is a trite old saying, but it is true nevertheless, One man with God is a majority.
 - a. Three hundred men empowered and lead by God, is greater than an army of 120,000 idolaters.
 - b. As Paul says later, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*
 5. When the Midianites fell before the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon, that man of faith was willing to say, *"Look at what the Lord hath done. Praise the Name of the Lord!"*
- E. This is key to revival. This must be a part of our hearts if we hope to see the miraculous power of God.