

EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

Message #8

Judges 6:25-32

Several years ago we went on vacation and ended up in San Antonio, Texas. While we were there we went and visited the famous small mission church known as the Alamo. Texas had declared itself to be an independent state from Mexico, and Mexico sent an army of 3000 men led by General Santa Ana to change their minds. In that small mission church was a handful of men, one of whom was Davy Crockett. They were faced with a decision. We can surrender, we can run, or we can fight. A line was drawn on the floor and all who wanted to fight were asked to step over the line and all but one did and all who did died. The courage displayed by those men caused all of Texas and the United States to use the battle cry “Remember the Alamo.” It was their courage that moved others to have courage.

When we come to this part of Gideon’s life, we come to a moment when Gideon must make a decisive decision for God. God has told Gideon to go and deliver Israel from the innumerable company of Midianites, who were dominating and looting the land of Israel (6:13, 14, 16). A line is drawn for Gideon and if he steps over the line he cannot ever go back. This is a big time moment in Gideon’s life; and if he makes the right decision to obey God here, there will be no turning back. If he has courage to trust God, follow God, and obey God’s Word, he will inspire a nation to do the same, and he will accomplish great things for the glory of God, but he can lose his life.

Now before God would use him for the biggest challenge of his life, He needed to develop him and teach Gideon that he could trust Him. So God decided to use a lesser scale of warfare to start the process. The point we see here is this:

WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO TRUST HIM AND GO TO WAR FOR GOD BY CAREFULLY FOLLOWING HIS WORD, THEY WILL SEE GOD GIVE VICTORY; BUT BEFORE GOD GIVES THE BIGGEST VICTORY, HE WILL DEVELOP HIS PEOPLE BY SMALLER VICTORIES.

Let’s remember the context. God came to Gideon and called him a “valiant warrior” (6:12). Gideon did not see himself as a valiant warrior. He came from a crazy family background, he was from the smallest tribe in Israel, and he was the youngest in his father’s house (6:15). He is scared, he is weak, and he has doubts. But Gideon was to be God’s man to deliver Israel from the Midianites. God intended to use Gideon for a major national deliverance, and the way God would get him on the path to become a valiant warrior was to give him a lesser assignment so he could see God work.

David did not start by trusting God to kill Goliath; he started by trusting God to kill a bear and a lion in private (I Samuel 17:32-37). Jesus said that if God’s people were faithful with a little amount, one day He will reward us with a great amount (Matthew 25:21).

You and I need to understand this point. God may have some big things in store for us to do down the road. He may want to use you in ways you never dreamed. Perhaps in ways we can't even imagine. Before He does, He will develop us in a series of lesser assignments and responsibilities. God first calls us to small tasks before He calls us to large tasks. If we are faithful in those lesser things, He will entrust us with greater things.

That is exactly what we see here. Now there are three main parts to this narrative:

PART #1 – God gives Gideon his first personal and practical assignment. **6:25-26**

The first assignment God gives to Gideon is a very personal and private assignment, not a public and national assignment. Gideon's faithfulness starts by him deciding to obey God privately when no one else was around. The kind of spirituality that God is looking for when He wants to use a servant in a great way is a private spirituality that is real when alone. **If God cannot trust us to obey Him in private , He will never use us to do big things in public .**

Before God will give us the big public job to do, He will develop us with a smaller private job. Before God entrusts us with big ministry, He develops us with smaller ministry. The smaller private ministry often starts at home. If we cannot be faithful in our own home in private, God will not ever entrust us with bigger ministries outside the home in public.

The city of Ophrah was totally given over to Baal worship. According to **verse 25**, Gideon's own father, Joash, had apparently built an altar to Baal on his own property. He also had built an idolatrous Asherah idol, which was a wooden pillar probably set in a grove of trees, which was dedicated to the Canaanite fertility goddess. Not only was this used by Gideon's family, but apparently this became somewhat of a "village shrine" place of worship.

This was in clear violation of God's Word. God had specifically told Israel through Moses in His law that the Asherah idols were to be torn down (i.e. Exodus 34:12-13; Deut. 7:5). This shows you how spiritually pathetic God's own people had become. They are doing just the opposite of what God's Word told them to do. It is pure grace that God would even consider delivering these people.

Gideon's father must have been a man of influence with property and wealth, because his family had servants of whom Gideon will use ten (**6:27**). Gideon came from an idolatrous home and environment that was not dedicated to God or to the Word of God.

God's first assignment to Gideon is to tear down the idols and put up a public altar to Me. Now Gideon had already built a private altar to the Lord (6:24), but now it was time to go public. **If we are going to be greatly used by God, there will come a moment when we will need to take a public stand, starting with our own family.**

This is certainly not a major national deliverance from the Midianites, but it was a job that needed to be done. If Gideon was going to be used by God to deliver Israel, he needed to set himself apart as one who would not be in any way involved in false idolatrous worship. He needed to demonstrate that he was sold out to God, starting with those close to him. **God cannot and will not ever bless His people when they choose to willfully live in disobedience and sin. God cannot and will not use His people when they refuse to stand for Him.**

According to **verse 25**, God wanted him to take a bull, which belonged to his father, and a seven year old bull and use them to tear down the massive Baal altar. This Baal altar and Asherah pole was so large that it required two bulls, plus ten men to get it down.

Remnants of these idolatrous shrines have been discovered in the Middle East and they are quite large and usually contain heavy rocks and stones. In fact, one archeological discovery found an altar 4 ½ foot tall and 26 feet wide. The Asherah was the name of a large wooden pole that was dedicated to the goddess of fertility. So this place was a place of idolatry and immorality. God said tear it down.

God said that when he had done that, Gideon was to offer both bulls as a sacrifice to God, and one of them was a seven year old bull. **Forgiveness of sin, even that of idolatry and immorality, must begin via blood atonement. There is no forgiveness apart from the shedding of blood.**

Now remember that the Midianites had dominated Israel for seven years (Judges 6:1); so when Gideon would offer a seven year old bull to God, it would mean that God had just put an end to a seven year domination and that He was willing to forgive and deliver.

Before God will do anything great for His people, idols must be completely eliminated.

This is not just an O.T. issue, but it is also an issue of the Grace Age. The Apostle John gave believers in the Church Age of Grace an admonition to “guard yourselves from idols” (I John 5:21). Idols can take on various forms, but the common denominator of all idols is that it pulls a focus and loyalty away from God and His Word. Really, something that becomes an idol becomes an idol because of the way we think about it. We make a mental decision to put something above God. Idolatry puts the focus on self and not God.

Idols can creep into the church and into our lives. Anything not true to the Word that we permit in the church is an idol. Prosperity theology is an idol. Self-esteem theology is an idol. Possibility thinking theology is an idol. Wealth can be an idol. Sports, work, family, friends, a relationship can become an idol. The moment any thing or any one pulls us away from a focus on God, it is idolatrous; and that is why John said we must always be on guard against idols if we want God to do great things with us.

God will not share His work with our former idols; He wants them gone. God is not looking for us to rededicate our idols to Him; He wants them completely eliminated. Before God will give total victory to His people, His people must eliminate idols.

Some practical lessons here:

- 1) Our faithfulness will really be proved at home in private, not out in public.
- 2) The first place where we must start to be victorious is in our own backyard. We may have to get rid of some things the family views as sacred.
- 3) God will not give great victory until the idols are gone. God will not and cannot grant victory to one with a divided heart. If we want God to do great things with us, we cannot compromise with sin.

PART #2 – Gideon obeys and carries out the assignment. **6:27**

This is not an easy assignment and actually is quite intimidating. To have to stand against your own family is a hard thing to do. But if we are going to be greatly used by God, we must stand up for God and His Word even if it means in the context of our own home and family.

Often, the most difficult place to stand for Jesus Christ is in the context of our own home and family. In many ways it is easier to take a stand for God with people who don't know us than with people who do know us. **Scriptural victory starts with us and our home.**

Gideon came from a very dysfunctional family. The family was so dysfunctional that it was actually prepared to kill any family member that did anything negative to a Baal altar (**6:29**). His own Israeli family was so alienated from God that he was afraid that if he took a stand for God, his own father and family would stand against him.

You do not have to come from a good, solid, Christian home to be greatly used by God. You may come from a very bizarre family background and end up a champion warrior for God.

According to **verse 27**, Gideon chose ten men from his servants and tore down his father's idols at night. The text says he was afraid so he did it at night. He was very afraid but he did obey God. As Gary Inrig said "**faith is not demonstrated by fearlessness, but by obedience**" (*Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, p. 102).

There may be times when taking a stand for God will leave us somewhat afraid. We don't know how things will turn out. But when we stand for God's Word, we will never stand alone.

Gideon obeyed God when he was afraid. Sometimes when we feel the weakest, we are the strongest. Obeying God does not mean you don't have some anxieties or fears. God may stretch us to the point where we are forced to obey, even when we are afraid. Those who obey God are always on the path of great victory.

PART #3 – Gideon experienced immediate results of obeying God. **6:28-32**

There are two main results of this act of obedience:

Result #1 - Those not right with God wanted to kill Gideon. **6:28-30**

It didn't take long for the people to learn that it was Gideon who did this. He used ten servants and obviously one of them opened their mouth. Dr. Chuck Swindoll has a policy on any who are close to him. He wants godly, tight-lipped, loyal people. If they can't keep their mouths shut, they need to be gone. I read that on his board if anyone leaks data that is confidential they are immediately dismissed. Obviously someone leaked the fact that Gideon was the guy who tore down the idols.

I want you to observe from verse 28 that the men of the city got up early to go worship their false idols. Do not miss this point. People dedicated to false religion are very dedicated people. They will get up very early to be involved in false religious worship. People dedicated to false religion can at times almost put God's people to shame. These false worshippers would never neglect their morning devotions. They would never miss their false worship services.

Now when they got to their place of worship, they found their idols had been torn down. When you come to **verse 30**, you see how depraved and fallen things had become in Israel. They were so far removed from God that they were ready to kill one who was right with God. In fact, they go to Joash's house and tell him to bring out his son, Gideon, so they can kill him. Gary Inrig said that **Judges 6:30** is the most graphic verse in the entire book of Judges to show the total apostasy that had taken place in Israel (*Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, p. 102). This is God's nation and it is totally depraved.

Years ago I witnessed to a Jewish doctor. We were discussing Israel and her land and the difficulty she has had. The man said to me, I cannot figure out how we even continue to exist. I said to him the Bible answers your question - God! The God of the Bible is Israel's God. Your God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and He is the reason you exist, and He is the God who will always see to it that Israel exists. Here is one of God's own Jewish people, who is highly educated, who is so far removed from proper theology that he is questioning Israel's existence.

Things were even worse than that in the days of Judges. God had done such wonderful things for Israel in delivering her from some major enemies, but she so wandered away from God that these Jewish people are ready to kill Gideon for standing up for their true God.

Sometimes when you take a proper stand for God and His Word, you will discover that you are standing very much alone with people who should know better.

Result #2 - Joash repents and comes to Gideon's defense. 6:31-32

Just imagine someone showing up at your home and asking you to send out your son so they can kill him simply because he wanted to worship the true God of the Bible. That is what you have happening right here.

This is exactly what will happen in the Tribulation. Jesus predicted that during the Tribulation when the Antichrist is trying to destroy Israel, many Jews will turn against each other and deliver up one another (Matthew 24:9-10).

Probably at this point in time, Joash came under terrible conviction. Deep down he knew his son was right. His son had stood for the true God and Joash knew it. He came face to face with the sin of his own idolatry and he repented.

Joash reasoned that if Baal were truly God, he wouldn't need us to kill Gideon; he can do it himself. In fact, in **verse 31** he proposes that if anyone acts in behalf of Baal, that he be put to death by morning. His point is, if Baal cannot defend himself he is not worthy of our worship. In fact, his father gave Gideon a new name Jerubbaal, which came to mean "Baal-fighter" or "Baal-conqueror." It is possible that this was intended to be a derogatory name; however, it would end up being a name that meant Gideon was a "valiant warrior."

I am convinced that when you are standing for the Word of God, there will be some people who will make fun of you and even call you something derogatory. But when you are mocked for standing for what is right, great is your name in heaven. Gideon is mockingly called Jerubbaal, but this name meant he had stood for God.

There is another story in history about John Knox, the Scottish Reformer of the 1500s. John Knox, a minister who learned from John Calvin, preached the Word of God against Catholicism and was arrested and became a prisoner, a galley slave on a French slave ship. One day a lieutenant of the guards brought a wooden image of the mother Mary on board and demanded that all of the slaves kiss the image. John Knox refused, grabbed the image and threw it overboard and said: "Let's see her save herself; she is light enough; let her learn to swim." When they watched the wooden idol do nothing, and that no divine judgment was brought upon John Knox, many started to look to Knox as their leader. They realized that the thing they trusted in was nothing.

It is so ironic that Gideon had been so afraid of his father, that he tore those false altars down at night; but his father became his biggest defender. When you take a right stand for God, you never know what God might do in the lives of others. Sometimes those we fear most may become our biggest support when we stand for the Lord.

This is a big moment in the life of Gideon. He had passed a major test and now he was about to become a "valiant warrior."