

## **Lessons From Judges: God's Unlikely Heroes Pt 4:**

### *Judges Chapter 6: Gideon: God's Timid Champion*

#### **Verses 1-6**

v 1

- As the chapter begins, we are re-introduced to the unfortunate cycle of sin that Israel had fallen into; the time of peace following Deborah and Barak's victory over Jabin has passed
  - They have given themselves once more over to the practice of evil, and in response, God has given them over into the hands of evil men
  - The text tells us that this would last for a period of 7 years

v 2

- This time God chose the Midianites to punish His people:
  - Even though the Midianites were descendants of Abraham by his second wife Keturah, they were anything but friendly:
  - They had brought sin into the Israelite camp in Numbers 25, when the daughter of a Midianite leader engaged in immorality with an Israelite-- and God has ordered them to be treated as enemies:
- And where are the people of God during this time? Hiding in the ground in holes and in caves!
  - What a sad commentary-- This is NOT where God's people belong--
  - But whenever God's people go against His will, it is a path that will lead them to places that they do not belong.

v 3

- In addition to the Midianites, there would be other tribes such as the Amelkites-- another enemy of Israel, one who has an important role to play in the future, would come along in the battle:
  - It is important that we point out the occasion that they chose to attack: when Israel had planted their seed, their enemies responded by coming in and setting up camp on top of it:

v 4

- But they didn't come just to steal, they came to destroy-- they left nothing to eat for man or beast, and made sure that nothing would grow in the land:

- The text states that they did this as far as Gaza-- in other words, across the whole land

v 5

- The text continues painting a grim picture by likening the invaders to a swarm of locust:

- The text says devastate (NASB) -- The word in the text means to decay, ruin, cause to corrupt:

- Their enemies swept through destroying and gorging, and when they left, the land was bare bones

v 6

- The text states that Israel was brought "very low" a word that means they became feeble:

- It was at this point that they began to cry out to the Lord:

- DO NOT wait until you have been brought low to call on the Lord!

- And, if you have, do not make the situation worse by putting it off-- Seek the Lord while He may be found

### **Verses 7-10**

v 7

- God heard the cries and prayers of the people: even if He didn't respond immediately the way that they had hoped:

v 8

- God responds by sending a message with an unknown prophet:

- He begins reminding them that it was not by their own hand or strength, but through the power of God alone that they were brought out of Egypt and slavery

v 9

- He furthermore states that it was not only the Egyptians that he drove out, but all of their enemies-- and gave them their land in their stead

v 10

- The prophet goes on to remind them that God had placed conditions on all of these great blessings

- Instead of fearing God, they had made the choice to show respect and reverence to the false gods that could not protect the people of Canaan

- Notice that the communication from the prophet ends very abruptly-- there is no promise of deliverance, no assurances, just a strong condemnation: What is God trying to communicate?

- Consider that God is giving them time to think on what they've done-- to truly give thought to the hurt they've caused to Jehovah: Yes, they are crying out, but as we will read later in the chapter, there are still Idols of Baal set up in the land!

- God doesn't want them to cry out because of their physical difficulty, He wants them to cry out from hearts of repentance:

- God is ready and willing for us to come to Him in repentance, but it must *be in repentance*

- This is very similar to the situation in **Jeremiah 3:12-14, 25-4:2, 3:10**

- God wants us to return with all our hearts

- The people have left out a key ingredient: They've neglected the seriousness of their sin:

- When we sin against the Lord, it should cause us deep sorrow and leave a lasting impression: Not that we hold on to the memory of a forgiven sin with a sense of guilt, but neither do we approach repentance with a casual flippancy:

- We remember past mistakes from the standpoint of being hurt so deeply from the pain we've caused God, that we never want to put Him through it again

### **Verses 11-18**

v 11

- The text introduces us to Gideon in a fitting way- he is representative of what all of Israel is doing: hiding from their enemy

- This isn't the ideal place to thresh wheat-- but it let him do it in secret and try to provide something for his family

v 12

- Imagine Gideon being addressed this way:
  - Gideon must have thought: Where? I'd like to meet this guy!
  - This by itself is a big lesson: God doesn't see as we see:
  - He looks at us and sees what we can be with Him
  - Those who find themselves feeling discouraged, those who believe that there isn't much that they can do for God, who feel like they just aren't of great value:
    - God looks at you and says: "The Lord is with you mighty warrior"

v 13

- Gideon responds with "where?!" Where is God?
  - He didn't see any miracles, just Mideonites, so God can't be there.
  - Like his fellow Israelites, Gideon only saw God in the thunder, the lightning, the great deliverances: They didn't see Him in the gentle, quiet, wind: (**1 Kings 19:11-13**)
  - God is not only with us when we perceive it-- God does not forsake His people

v 14

- The Lord does not address the complaint or question: He simply says GO
  - He is speaking to what matters: God is with you--
  - He speaks the same words that He spoke to Joshua prior to crossing into the Land-- but Gideon will need more convincing:

v 15-16

- Gideon responds again with questions: How? I'm nothing!
  - Listen: You still are not getting the point: God Is With You:
  - Gideon's focus is placed solely on what he could accomplish through his own strength: He is right to be afraid if he had to depend on himself:
  - But God is trying to shift his focus on where it needs to be:

v 17-18

- Gideon still requires a sign; some tangible proof that God is with him:
- It is a testament to God's patience with us that he gives 3 signs in this chapter

### **Verses 19-24**

- Not as much to remark on in these verses, but in all three of God's signs, He leaves no room for doubt
  - Not only does the sacrifice completely vanish, but so does the Lord
  - Gideon is terrified instead of encouraged-- This is no Joke: this is the LORD

### **Verses 25-32**

v 25-26

- The symbolism is impossible to miss:
  - Not only is Gideon to tear down these idols, but is to use them as kindling to offer sacrifice to the Lord
  - The impotence of these false gods, and the supremacy of Jehovah is clearly implied

v 27

- Gideon obeys: and yet despite the sign and assurance of the Lord, He is hesitant to obey God's command openly
  - This further lends evidence that while the people may have been crying out, it was not with a whole heart-- they were not yet ready to turn to God and leave their wickedness behind:

v 28-30

- The men who find the idols torn down and burned are furious! Who did this to baal: They must die!
  - The significance of the situation was completely lost on them: How could they put their trust in what could clearly not save itself-- to in turn save them?
  - We gawk at them-- but we are guilty of the same thing from time to time:
  - **Jeremiah 2:12-13** Anything that we put in God's place is a broken cistern:

v 31-32

- Joash acts as the voice of reason: If Baal is strong enough to deliver us, then he should be able to stand up for himself
  - Gideon is given the name Jerubbaal-- a constant challenge to Idolatry

### **Verses 33-40**

- As the chapter concludes, the time for the Midianites to invade is at hand:
  - In response Gideon gathers his tribes, and several others as well

- This looks like Gideon has been influenced by the idolatry around him
  - In a society where there are numerous supposed gods, the various priests and followers are constantly looking for which god is more powerful, who should I follow
  - Gideon is not asking for guidance: he is asking for assurance of guidance already given (*Fleenor and Ziese p. 120*) Signs do not produce lasting faith-- faith that lasts is when it is placed entirely on God and His promises
    - But God responds to both of the signs in an overwhelming fashion: There can be no doubt that God is with Gideon:
    - It will be in the next chapter than God will require Gideon to put that new found faith to the test.

**Conclusion:**

- This is a wonderful chapter that begins a favorite story from the book of Judges
- It is a chapter that shows us how God desperately wants each of us to turn away from whatever emptiness we might be putting in His place, and turn our lives over to Him, placing our faith in Him fully, and in what He can work through us if we will trust His Word.