

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Judges 6

We began to look at the next judge that the Lord raised up to deliver the Children of Israel from the oppression of their enemies.

And so we looked at the first portion of chapter 6 where God raised up Gideon – an unlikely deliverer –

Gideon was a scared-y cat.

He was threshing wheat behind the wine press because he was scared of the enemies

When the Angel of the Lord told him to take care of his house and destroy his father's altars to Baal and Asheroth – he decided to do it by night.

Not only was he fearful – he needed constant reassurance from God – despite God enabling him to do the work that He called Gideon to do

Gideon doesn't have the qualifications of a man of valor -

Yet – God chose Gideon to deliver the Children of Israel because He was going to get the glory in victory.

God is still going to use Gideon –

However, before Gideon can lead the Israelite army against their enemies – God is going to guide Gideon every step of the way.

And we will see that in His interactions with Gideon – He deals with us the same way.

**Let's pray...**

**[Jdg 6:33-40 NKJV] 33 Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.**

So we see the enemies of Israel – they are making their way through the land like locust and continuing to oppress the people – they were stealing their harvest and destroying their land

And now, they encamp near Gideon's hometown.

By the way – we are going to find out next week that the army of the Midianites and Amalekites was 135,000 strong – keep that number in your mind.

**34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. 35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.**

Back in verse 14 – the Lord had told Gideon “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”

But now, as the time for action has come, God puts His Spirit on Gideon.

I think this is a valuable application for us –

We step, God fills

Many times we feel inadequate to what the Lord has called us to do

But, out of obedience to God, we take a step in our “own strength” –

And then the Holy Spirit comes in to pick us up and take us through the event.

In our study last week, Gideon took those steps of faith by destroying the altars and now we see God’s empowering.

Church, God will meet us with His strength.

So Gideon blows the trumpet – he begins to gather the people to go against the Midianites and the Amalekites and we see that the Abiezrites - the first ones to answer the call and follow him were his own people.

Those from the same clan as he was from –

It was only a few verses ago that they wanted to kill him – but we see the difference when the Spirit of the Lord is upon him.

It was the members of his own family, the people closest to him that were affected most.

One of the lessons that we can learn from this is that people will be affected by our stand.

If Jesus has truly changed our life – if we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives, the people closest to us will be the ones that will be affected the most.

Just like we see in the life of Gideon.

**36 So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—**

"If" You will do "as You have said."

Gideon is doubting God – and he has no reason to doubt God's promises.

Back in verse seventeen Gideon had asked, "show me a sign that it is You who talk with me." The Angel of the Lord had already proven Himself to Gideon by consuming a sacrifice Gideon brought.

But Gideon doubts as he is about to lead his people against the enemy.

Church, when we doubt God – we should always remember His faithfulness,

We should remember His mighty works in our lives

We should remember the cross

God's past faithfulness ought to be more than sufficient for us to trust Him.

**37 "look, I shall put a **fleece of wool** on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, 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 the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.**

For those of us not familiar with a fleece of wool – it is the entire coat of a sheep when it has been sheared – it was something that was probably in the area where Gideon was.

So Gideon concocted a test using it.

Ok Lord – I am going to take this wool and place it on the threshing floor – in the morning, if the floor is dry and the wool is wet, I will believe You.

The amazing thing is that the Lord allowed Gideon to test Him.

God not only submitted to being tested; He went way beyond the test, and loaded that fleece with the dew of the morning.

It was soaked. There could be no doubt right????

**39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry**

**only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." 40 And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.**

Keep in mind that all this is taking place as the armies are surrounding Gideon –

He has wasted two nights.

This time, he is testing God by having Him do the opposite –

Wet ground – dry wool.

And God allows Gideon to test Him again.

Many theologians will fault Gideon for his lack of faith – but notice that the scriptures do not tell us that God rebuked him for it.

He patiently goes along & confirms His will through these things.

**[Jdg 7:1-25 NKJV] 1 Then Jerubbaal (that [is], Gideon) and all the people who [were] with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. 2 And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who [are] with you [are] too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'**

Gideon leads the Israelites into position

We are going to find out in the next couple of verse that he has 32,000 men behind them – remember, I mentioned that the Midianites and the Amalekites had 135,000.

So they are outnumbered 4 to 1

Not only are they outnumbered, we will also find out that they don't have any weapons or armor.

So God looks at what's going on and says, Gideon, you have too many in your army.

Why does God want Israel to have a smaller army?

God knows that sometimes we tend to take all the credit.

We can have a sense that God is at work, but after it's all over, we kind of pat ourselves on the back for doing such a good job.

So for Gideon and Israel, God makes it harder.

I am pretty sure Gideon wasn't happy about this – but it was not negotiable.

And God is going to be the one that reduces the army for Gideon.

**3 "Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever [is] fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.**

Ok Gideon, anyone who is fearful – they get an honorable discharge.

They could split –

And two-thirds take off.

To understand why God gave this command – we have to understand that He was simply repeating from the Law that He had given the Children of Israel concerning warfare– and in Deut 20 – Certain people were to be exempt from fighting in the battles.

Those that were afraid were one of the groups that were exempt.

And the reason is that fear can become contagious – God didn't want people running away when the battle started and influencing others to do the same thing.

If you are going to run, do it before the battle.

So the odds went from 4 to 1, to 13 to 1

There are only 10,000 left

**4 But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people [are] still [too] many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, [that] of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."**

So God tells Gideon that he still has too many in his army.



This next elimination was going to be by God

He designed an elimination test, but at first He didn't tell anyone what He was looking for.

Take them to go get a drink of water - Gideon

Gideon was to observe, and then God would tell him to eliminate based on something he saw in their behavior.

This was a test.

**5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."**

So Gideon bring his army down to the water –

Now, based upon the geography of where this is taking place – the water here is most likely a spring that is bubbling up from the ground.

So Gideon lets them drink and the Lord identifies the behavior that is going to divide them.

There was a group of them that knelt next to the spring and stuck their heads in the water and then there was a group that reached down scooped up water with their hand and drank it like a dog drinks water from a bowl.

**6 And the number of those who lapped, [putting] their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.**

9700 people knelt down and drank and only 300 reached down and drank like a dog.

If I were Gideon, I'd probably be thinking to myself, "Okay, God is going to tell me that the group of 9,700 is the group He's going to use. Wrong.

**7 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the [other] people go, every man to his place."**

So, Gideon started with 32,000

The law cut it down to 10,000

And by the end of the day, Gideon is left with 300 lap dogs.

If you read commentaries – many of them are going to say that the lappers were the ones that were more vigilant – the better soldiers.

However, I think that this contradicts what God intended.

God was whittling down Gideon's forces in order that He, and not they, would get the glory for the victory over the Midianite alliance.

If you say that these 300 men were the most prepared, and possessed the greatest vigilance, then you make them a heroic, elite fighting force.

Whether you lapped water or knelt with your face in the spring, it revealed nothing about your military prowess.

God's foreknowledge was that there were less lappers

- only 300 who would drink that way.

They were simply 300 random guys out of thirty-two thousand.

**8 So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all [the rest of] Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.**

So Gideon and his 300 man army – they are going to go to battle with trumpets in their hand.

**9 It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.**

Notice – God is already given them victory – He is not saying, I will give you victory – I have delivered it into your hand.

**10 "But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11 "and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be**

**strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who [were] in the camp.**

God is sending Gideon down first –

God knows that Gideon still is struggling with fear

However, we see God encouraging Gideon by sending Purah with him.

And also we see the purpose of the mission –

Gideon was going to receive intel about the enemy that would serve to strengthen him.

**12 Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels [were] without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. 13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: [To my] surprise, a loaf of **barley** bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed."**

So Gideon goes down – and he overhears a conversation between two Midianites.

One of the dudes had a bad dream –

Now, remember, barley was the grain that was reserved for the livestock.

People didn't eat barley loaves – the Children of Israel had to eat barley loaves because the Midianites were stealing all the wheat.

The barley bread represented Israel at its lowest point.

The tent in the dream obviously referred to the nomadic Midianites and their allies.

What destroys the tent?

Not a hurricane; not a cyclone; not an earthquake, or a tornado, or a brush fire, or a plague, or a rockslide, or a bolt of lightning, or a tidal wave, or an avalanche.

Not an angel, either.

No, it was a barley loaf. Not a big, oversized loaf, either. Think bagel

**14 Then his companion answered and said, "This [is] nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." 15 And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand."**

When Gideon overheard this, he realized God was at work in all kinds of ways to make sure of the victory.

We don't know how the Midianites knew of Gideon – but one thing they did know was the God of Israel –

**16 Then he divided the three hundred men [into] three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. 17 And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: 18 "When I blow the trumpet, I and all who [are] with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, '[The sword of] the LORD and of Gideon!' " 19 So Gideon and the hundred men who [were] with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that [were] in their hands.**

Gideon splits the 300 into three groups – he is going to surprise the Midianites into thinking that they are completely surrounded.

Remember, all they have is the trumpets and torches that are inside pitchers

At the command of Gideon, they were to break the pitchers that hid their torches, and blow on their shofars (trumpets) the call to attack.

The light, noise, and confusion would send the Midianites into a panic.

Remember, they were supposed to yell, "The sword of Yahweh & of Gideon!"

From his venture into the Midianite camp, Gideon knew God had already been softening up the Midianites with a little psychological warfare.

He'd been placing Gideon's name in their hearts as something to fear.

I had you make a note where Gideon says, Look at me and do likewise

This is the same thing Paul tells us in 1 Cor 11

**[1Co 11:1 NKJV] 1 Imitate me, just as I also [imitate] Christ.**

How many times in your Christian life have you been told to "keep your eyes on Jesus?" It is illustrated nicely by Gideon.

His men must keep their eyes on him, in order to know what to do.

**20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers--they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing--and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" 21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. 22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.**

So as the 300 men come into the camp –

The Midianites wake up – they are confused and think they are surrounded by a huge army.

They start running in every direction – it is night

When one group of Midianites from the west side of the camp run into another group coming from the opposite direction from the east side of the camp, both groups think the other is the Israelites, and they start killing each other.

**23 And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites. 24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan." Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. 25 And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.**

These were those who had been honorably discharged on account of their fear; and those who had been dismissed by the Lord because they didn't drink like a dog.

They remained in the vicinity, and now were called to join the battle.

And Gideon told them to keep them from escaping – and the tribes captured two of their leaders and cut their heads off.

Now, one would think that after the tremendous victory –



After seeing how 300 men defeated 135,000 men that the people would be congratulating Gideon with attaboys!!!!

We will see next week that this is not the case –

Even though they are victorious, they complain about how victory was achieved.

Remember – God wanted the glory for Himself – and we will see that some of the tribes get mad because they wanted glory.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.!



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