

Becoming a Man of Strength

Judges 6:1-40

August 23, 2009

Intro

We now turn to the book of Judges to understand the heart of God in delivering Israel from their wayward heart. The condition of Israel at that time is summarized best in chapter 2. There we read that the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, but then it says, "There arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which he had done for Israel."

That was the problem, the next generations hadn't experienced the miracles of God as the generations before them had and so they did not know the Lord. That is the key phrase. They didn't know the Lord and so they didn't follow after Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength as Joshua's generation had heard so many times that they must do. Joshua admonished the people that they should cling to the Lord and to take diligent heed to love the Lord.

So the book of Judges is really about the lessons of unfaithfulness. They were unfaithful and then, sure enough, just as God had forewarned them, life became extremely difficult. It would finally get so bad that they would cry out to the Lord.

What is amazing is that each time they cried out to the Lord, He would answer by sending them a deliverer, a judge, to rescue them from their oppression. They would then follow the Lord while that deliverer was alive, but then they would fall back to the ways of the world, of the gods of the nations that remained among them. We see here another cause of their failure, they didn't fully follow the Lord in removing the pockets of worldliness that remained among them and so they became a snare to them and thorns to their sides. It was these foreign gods would seem to trip them up over and over.

So here is the story of a time of oppression and in their distress they called out to God and God sent a deliverer, but a more unlikely deliverer would be hard to find.

I. Faith is the Answer

- 1 In verse seven the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of the oppression of Midian.
- 2 So God sent a prophet to the sons of Israel to open the eyes of their heart. The point of God's message was simple, "I am the same God who brought you up from Egypt; my power has not diminished. Why didn't you listen to my voice?"
- 3 So God is pointing out to them the root of the problem. The oppression of the Midianites was just a symptom. The real problem was that they no longer had faith in God.

A. God calls you what you will be

- 4 The story then turns to the angel of the Lord who we understand to be an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament.

- 5 He came to a young man by the name of Gideon who happened to be threshing wheat in a winepress in order to save it from the Midianite raiders. In other words, he was hiding in fear.
- 6 The angel of the Lord then addressed him with a most unusual greeting. He called out to Gideon and said, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior."
- 7 What's amazing about this greeting is that in Gideon's mind he was anything but a valiant warrior, and he certainly could not understand how God could be with him. So Gideon addressed both parts of the greeting.
- 8 First, he asked what many people would ask in that situation, "If the Lord is with us, then why has all this happen to us? And where are all his miracles?" In fact, he clearly admitted that he had come to the conclusion that the Lord had abandoned Israel.
- 9 The caution for us is to not blame God when we encounter trials and tribulations. God is still on the throne.
- 10 Gideon thought that all of God's miracles were behind them, but in truth, there were many miracles still to come. The same is true for us.

Illus – We can look back at all the great revivals, even going back to the great move of God in the book of Acts and wonder if all the great works of God are behind us. But there is so much more that God has said that he will do.

Habakkuk 3:2, Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.

- 11 God answer to Gideon's objection was simple; *Go in strength, have I not sent you?*
- 12 So Gideon addressed the second part of the greeting, that he was a valiant warrior.
- 13 "My family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."
- 14 God's answer to him is straightforward and simple, "Surely I will be with you, and you will defeat Midian as one man."

Illus - God gave the name Abraham, which means, father of many nations, before Abraham had the son which God promised.

God gave Simon the name Peter, which means "rock," while he was still a difficult fisherman.

- 1 God knows who you will be, and he addresses you according to who you will become.
- 2 God is looking for a valiant men of strength and women of excellence today and is looking for those who will rise up to their calling.

2 Chronicles 16:9, The eyes of the Lord search to and fro throughout the whole earth in order to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are completely his.

B. The Lord loves to use the weak

- 1 “How can I deliver Israel?” Gideon was asking, “for I am a nobody.”
- 2 Do you know how many people never do anything for the Lord because they think they are nobody?

Illus- I remember when I decided to go to Bible college to become a pastor I was sharing this with a friend of mine who said, “Man, that's awesome, I wish I could do that.”

I said, "Then do it, what's stopping you?" "Oh," he said, "you don't know how much sin I have in my past."

- 3 Apparently, he doubted God’s power.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 God has chosen the foolish things

- 4 When we think poorly of ourselves, this is not humility; this is a lack of faith. This is clearly seen in Gideon’s response to God’s greeting.
- 5 Interestingly, arrogance is also a lack of faith.
- 6 The point is that there are so many people that are plagued by having a very poor image of themselves. But we should be encouraged when we see so many examples in the scriptures that God delights to use those who are weak to demonstrate the greatness of his glory.

Illus – Moses had resigned himself that his life was a failure, but it was at that point that God called him to be one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

David was the youngest of eight brothers and was considered too insignificant to make a difference in Israel's war with the Philistines, yet God would call him to be the greatest of kings in the Old Testament.

- 7 Let us not allow our insignificance to keep us from what God has called us to do.

App – We need more people like Joshua and Caleb...

- 8 Because there is a sin of doing nothing.

James 4:17, Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

II. God will be Your Strength

- 1 One of the great lessons that we learn from the book of Joshua as well as from the book of Judges is that God is the strength of our lives.
- 2 The Midianites were not the problem, they were just a symptom. The problem was that Israel was not what they were called to be.
- 3 Israel was reduced to a weak nation because they turned their heart away from God. We see this theme throughout the scriptures, "the way of the transgressor is hard."
- 4 We see scriptural promises that make this clear.

Proverbs 6:26-28, For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread... Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

- 1 But we also see the strength that comes in the Lord.

2 Samuel 22:32, 34, 37, For who is God, besides the Lord? And who is a rock, besides our God? He makes my feet like hinds' feet, and sets me on my high places. You enlarge my steps under me, and my feet have not slipped.

A. God will contend for you

- 1 So when Gideon responded to the Lord that he was insignificant, the Lord responded, "Surely I will be with you, and you will defeat Midian."
 - 2 The Lord then asked Gideon to take a stand in his own home, for his father had an altar to Baal behind the house in the Lord told him to take it down.
 - 3 What a great point of application for all of us. If we want to be a man of great strength spiritually, then we must begin by taking down the altars to the world that are in our own lives, and in our own homes.
- 1 Gideon wasn't quite ready to be a valiant warrior, so he did this under the cover of darkness. The next morning the people of the city wanted to kill him, but instead his father said that Baal should contend for himself and so Gideon was given another

name that day – Jerub-baal, which means, "contender with Baal."

- 2 So here Gideon must stand on the promise that God gave to him, and this is a promise we see throughout the scriptures. "God will be with you."
- 3 This is really a key to understanding spiritual strength, "God will be with you."

Illus - after the resurrection when the disciples had been told to wait in Galilee, they grew impatient, so Peter said, "I'm going fishing." They fished all night and caught nothing, but the next morning the Lord appeared on the shore, "Cast your nets on the other side of the boat," and a great catch was taken.

Illus- when Joshua was giving his final speech before his death, he asked Israel, "How can it be that one man is able to put 1000 to flight?" "God fights for you" is the answer.

2 Chronicles 20:15, thus says the Lord to you, "Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's."

Illus - I heard an expression a long time ago that I've always remembered, "Never wrestle a pig. He has way too much fun, and you get way too dirty."

Stand on God's character and live life God's way and he will contend for you.

B. Don't ask for a fleece -- believe

- 4 Gideon is called a valiant warrior, but he doesn't become one in a day. Even though God has made it abundantly clear what he is asking Gideon to do, and even has shown him a sign, Gideon still has his doubts. So he asks to use a fleece.
- 5 Many people see this as an example and want to set out a fleece before God today. But the problem was that it was Gideon's lack of faith that motivated him.
- 6 Jesus even corrected those who sought after a sign.

Matthew 12:39, But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

- 7 Walk by the Holy Spirit and believe what he said

Matthew 28:20, "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."