

When Little is Much

Judges 7:1-23

August 30, 2009

Intro

As we study the book of Judges, we see a pattern emerging. The generation of Joshua died out. That generation served the Lord because they had seen all the great work which the Lord had done for Israel. But another generation arose after them; a generation that did not know the Lord, nor had they seen the work which He had done for Israel.

Therefore, their hearts turned away from following after God and turned toward the gods of the world. The result was predictable. They lost their strength spiritually, and so they lost their strength nationally. Then they would cry out to the Lord and the Lord would send a deliver, a judge, to save the people from their oppression.

The amazing thing is that this pattern would be repeated over and over for more than 250 years. The people would follow after the Lord as long as their deliverer was leading them, but when that judge would die, the people would again allow their hearts to go back to the gods of the world.

Last week, we were studying Judges chapter 6 where the nation of Israel was being oppressed by the Midianites. We also met a young man named Gideon who was threshing wheat in a winepress. He was then greeted by an angel of the Lord, really it was an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament, who greeted him with the amazing greeting, "The Lord is with you, oh valiant warrior." But God was addressing him as he would become, because at that moment he was certainly not a valiant warrior.

But then we see that transition, as the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he called the tribes near the region of Galilee to come up with him. Here in chapter 7, we see how the Lord uses a man of spiritual strength to bring about victory.

I. Less of Me and More of Him

- 1 In the opening verses of chapter 7, the story takes an amazing turn. 32,000 men had responded to Gideon's call, but the Lord said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many."
- 2 What we saw in chapter 6 was that God delights to use those who are weak. When the Lord hailed Gideon as a valiant warrior, Gideon responded that his family was least of the families of Manasseh and that he was the least of his brothers.
- 3 And this is a pattern we see throughout the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

- 1 In the same way then, God told Gideon to thin down the ranks by allowing anyone who had fear to return home. Amazingly, 22,000 people took Gideon's offer and

only 10,000 remained.

A. Fear inhibits faith

- 4 The scriptures have a lot to say about fear. What we see over and over is that fear is the opposite of faith. In fact, fear gets in the way of faith.
- 5 One of the problems of fear is that it is contagious. In fact, this was addressed by Moses.

Deuteronomy 20:1-8 The laws of warfare address fear

Illus – We also saw this at Kadesh Barnea when the 10 of the 12 spies came back with fear in their hearts.

Their fear kept them from believing the promises which God had given to them and to their fathers, and God called them an unfaithful generation.

- 6 What's interesting is that this plan of sending 22,000 men home could easily have increased fear in the others because the odds against them have now been greatly increased.
- 7 From chapter 8 we discover that they were facing an enemy 135,000 strong. That means that the odds against them are now 13.5 to 1.

Illus – When the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee and a terrible storm arose against them while Jesus slept in the stern of the boat, they became greatly afraid and said to Him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea and then He said to his disciples...

Mark 4:40-41, And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

B. Fear and pride are connected

- 1 One of the things we can observe in life is that fear and pride are connected. There are of course many different causes of fear. There is the fear of perishing. That was in the heart of the disciples on the Sea of Galilee.
- 2 But there is also a fear of looking bad in the eyes of others, which is pride. What if I trust the Lord and something bad happens?

Illus – Before I started the church, I had a fear that it would fail. It was pride.

- 3 But that brings up the question of how can I endure when things go badly?
- 4 We need to be willing to completely trust God even if things don't go the way we want them to go; for that is faith in the sovereign hand of God.

Romans 8:28, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Habakkuk 3:17-18, Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

- 5 What we discover in scripture is that it's not about me; it's all about Him.

Psalm 127:1 -2, Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Illus - I remember when the church was very young and also very small. I remember one month in particular that was very difficult to pay our bills and I called out to God. His answer was very simple, "It's my church. You be faithful and I'll do the rest."

C. Be spiritually alert

- 6 When Gideon had 10,000 men left with him, God then said that even that was too many men.
- 7 He then had Gideon bring the men down to drink water from the spring of Harod where He would test them. All the men who drew the water up to their mouths with their hands were separated from those who knelt down to drink directly from the water.
- 8 God then instructed Gideon to send everyone home who knelt down to drink; that he would deliver Israel with those who remained. There were 300 men left.
- 9 It's important to note that God said he would test them by how they drank their water. Drinking water is a very ordinary thing, but these 300 stayed on the alert even while they drank water.
- 10 Every day we are also in a spiritual battle, and God calls us to stay on the alert as well. In fact, men of faith, men of spiritual strength, are always on the alert for what God may be doing.

Matthew 16:2-3, But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?”

- 1 In another place, Jesus reminded us again of the importance of staying on the alert spiritually.

Luke 21:36, “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6, But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

II. He is God of the Impossible

- 1 Gideon’s army has now been reduced to 300 men. This is what you could consider an impossible situation. How can 300 men have victory over 135,000 of the enemy?
- 2 Are you one of those people who wonders why everything has to be impossible?
- 3 The scripture tells us that when God does the impossible it gives him greater glory.

Illus - I remember when I was asked to speak in another city to raise funds for our missions work. I set my alarm wrong and woke up 30 minutes before the plane was scheduled to leave. That was when the miracles began.

A. God will strengthen your faith

- 1 So God instructed Gideon to go down against the camp of the Midianites. But then he said, "But if you are afraid to go down..."

Mark 9:23-24, And Jesus said to him, “If You can?” All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.”

- 2 God was making a way for Gideon to be strengthened in his faith. This is also another principle that we see throughout scripture; that God strengthens faith.
- 3 God strengthened Gideon’s faith when he first met him and called him a valiant

warrior, and he is strengthening him now.

Illus - God is strengthened David's faith when he allowed him to encounter both a lion and a bear before he faced Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:36, "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."

1 God also strengthens our faith. God does this in several ways.

Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

2 We also know that God strengthens our faith through the trials, tribulations, and difficulties we encounter in life, because God demonstrates that he is God of the impossible.

Luke 1:37, "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Luke 18:27, But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

B. Faith is strong confidence in God

4 Fear comes from looking at our problems. The more you look at your problems, the greater they become.

5 But faith comes from keeping your eyes on the Lord. And the more you look to God, the more your problems come into perspective.

Illus – When the Lord appeared to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee during the night, he was walking on water. Peter called out to him, "If it is you, Lord, command me to come to you on the water." And Peter got out of the boat and walked with him, but when his eyes were fixed on the storm he began to sink.

6 When Gideon told his men the battle plan, it must have caused them great concern, because he put trumpets, empty pictures, and torches in their hands. But their confidence at this point was set. They were going to trust in whatever God asked him to do.

Acts 4:13, Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

Philippians 3:3, we... worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,