

“No Other God”
Judges 6:22-32
(Preached at Trinity, March 1, 2015)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. At the end of **Chapter 5** we once again found the familiar pattern.
 - (1) After Deborah Israel entered a period of peace
Judges 5:31 NAU - "And the land was undisturbed for forty years."
 - (2) They again forgot God and fell into sin
Judges 6:1 NAU - "Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD"
 - (3) God's condemnation fell upon them and He delivered them over to their enemies
Judges 6:1-2 NAU - "LORD gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. ² The power of Midian prevailed against Israel."
The Midianites plagued Israel greatly. They were forced to hide in caves. Every time Israel planted a crop the Midianites would destroy it before they could harvest.
They destroyed their crops as well as all of their livestock.
 - (4) Then, once again, Israel cried out unto God.
Judges 6:6 NAU - " So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD."
 - (5) God responds by sending a prophet to declare to them the reason for their suffering – **Verses 7-10**
Judges 6:10 NAU - "But you have not obeyed Me."
5. God then calls Gideon as the deliverer of Israel
Judges 6:12 NAU - "The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."
6. Gideon was weak and timid and he knew it.
Judges 6:15 NAU - "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."
7. The most dangerous place a man can be in is to think he is able. The most dangerous words are, "I can do this." Gideon was exactly the kind of man God uses.
 - A. God tells him,
Judges 6:16 NAU - "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."
 - B. Gideon would discover what other great men discovered – God is our strength
Moses:
Exodus 15:2 NAU - "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him"
David:
Psalms 28:7 NAU - "The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;"

- C. God tells Gideon:
Judges 6:14 NAU - "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"
8. But first things first. Israel was guilty of wicked idolatry. God will have no rivals.
Isaiah 42:8 NAU - "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images."
- A. Before God would bless Israel and deliver them from their enemies they had to put away their other gods—tear down the altars!
 God commands Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal
Judges 6:25-26 NAU - " Now on the same night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; ²⁶ and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down."
- B. Baal was the male deity and Asherah was the female goddess – a symbol of fertility whose worship was filled with behavior that doesn't take great discernment to imagine.
- C. Gideon obeyed and went by stealth at night because of his great fear. We need not condemn his fear but rather praise his obedience.
- D. Man doesn't easily part with his idols.
 For his action Gideon received the death penalty.
Judges 6:30 NAU - "Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."
- E. Joash contends for his son in a manner that reminds us of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. If Baal is a great god let him defend himself.
Judges 6:31 NAU - "If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar."
9. God demands that we trust Him and that we trust Him alone. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Tear down all other altars!
10. We need to understand the nature of Israel's idolatry. It isn't that they put away God entirely. They never did this. They always gave some measure of honor to God. What they were guilty of is adding the practices of the pagan religions.
 Israel had fallen into wicked idolatry but it was actually syncretism.
- A. Definition – "the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion."
- B. In other words, Israel had not completely abandoned Jehovah as their God. Instead they added Him to the gods of the pagans.
 God spoke through His prophet:
Judges 6:10 NAU - "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me."
 (1) God was about to make it clear to Gideon and to all Israel that He alone is God.

- (2) This is why God would reduce Gideon's army was reduced from 32,000 down to only 300 men. He alone is God.
With God as their God they would defeat an army that is describes as beyond number
Judges 7:12 NAU - "Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore."
- C. Israel's continual sin was that of syncretism. This was clearly seen in the wilderness with the Golden Calf episode. It was nothing but a wicked and vain attempt to serve false gods alongside the one true God. Listen to Aaron –
Exodus 32:4-5 NAU - "He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt." ⁵ Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the LORD."
- D. Israel would do this continually throughout their history. They infused the sinful customs and worship of the pagan people that surrounded them with the worship of Yahweh.
2 Kings 17:9-12 NAU - " The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set for themselves *sacred* pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations *did* which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. ¹² They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."
10. It wasn't that they denied God outright. They simply combined His worship with the practices of the surrounding cultures.
- Of the Samaritans we read.
^{NAS}**2 Kings 17:33** – "They feared the LORD and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile."
 - On Mount Carmel Elijah confronted the sinful idolatry of Israel:
1 Kings 18:21 NAU - "Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word."
11. If the first table of the law describes God's worship then this first command tells us that God alone shall be worshipped. Spurgeon's Catechism:
Question 43: What is required in the first commandment?
Answer: The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.
12. Upon this commandment all others rest. It is the very heart of religion and the very basis of our duty to God. There is one God and all men owe supreme allegiance to Him. Breaking this command is high treason.
13. "Thou shalt have no other gods" – This declares the absolute supremacy of God. He will share His glory with none. He will have no rivals.

- A. Of the Five Solas of the Reformation none screams louder than *soli Deo Gloria* – To God alone be the glory.
 - B. Man is prone to idolatry. He is prone to elevate worldly things to the place of preeminence and setting his love upon them.
Calvin called the human heart an idol factory.
14. Syncretism has often plagued the church—how did eggs and bunnies get added to Easter? Syncretism is very much a reality in the United States. Christianity has been wed with modern culture to form a new religion – a cultural Christianity. It is a blending of the altar of humanistic secularism with Christianity. God says, “Tear down the altars.”
- I. What are the marks of Syncretism in the United States
- A. First of all, we can see it in the shift of clarity in the Gospel message – a new gospel has been infused into the true Gospel.
 - 1. The nature of saving faith is different in this new gospel - Saving faith demands trusting in the merits of Christ’s life and death upon the cross as full satisfaction for our sin
 - a. But we don’t use the word sin today. People don’t want to hear about condemnation and hell.
 - b. So the Gospel today is accepting Jesus into your life. It is about letting Jesus help you to have a better life.
 - 2. Repentance is no longer presented as essential to the Gospel
 - a. Understanding your sin is an essential aspect of the Gospel. No one will turn to Christ if they don’t see their guilt.
 - b. People today are often brought to Christianity without being confronted by their sin. They “come” to Christ to meet their “felt” needs, to solve their problems.
 - c. Children are being baptized today before the perfect work of the Holy Spirit is allowed to work – conviction, sorrow
 - 3. Regeneration has lost all meaning
The miracle of God’s transforming grace is lost
 - 4. The result is multitudes of people following a religion based on traditions that are void of Christ. Church is all about activities and fellowship. It has little to do with Christ.
 - 5. It would appear that today many have become ashamed of the Gospel
Romans 1:16 NAU - " For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
 - 6. The majority of Americans claim Christianity, but for most it is this Westernized, Americanized Christianity. God says, Tear down the altars.”
 - B. Second, we can see it in the absence of theological truth
 - 1. In what has been defined as the “Post Modern” world truth is being seen as something that is relative. There are no more absolutes.
Christianity is a religion that rests upon a Book – the writings of the Apostles and Prophets.
 - 2. Few professing Christians know what the Bible teaches, and they will not tolerate someone who tells them the truth. They don’t understand the essential doctrines of the faith. And they turn their eyes away from the demands the Bible places upon our lives.

3. We see this perverted Christianity all around us
 - a. Many of the mainline denominations now support same-sex marriage
 - b. Most of the House of Representatives and the Senate profess Christianity, yet most do not hold to even the basics of Biblical morality
 - c. The sad thing is the majority of Americans profess Christianity yet are completely blind to the demands of genuine Christianity
- C. Thirdly, we can see it in how the modern church operates – pragmatism is the rule. The modern church is undergoing the greatest transformation since the Reformation - But whereas the Reformation was founded upon Biblical truth the modern movement is being founded upon pragmatism
 1. It seems that the modern church is being restructured in order to appeal to the lost man
 - a. Anonymity without accountability
 - b. Entertaining a congregation is more important than feeding them
 - c. Tolerance instead of holiness
 - d. Modern Christianity has rejected God’s Law calling it legalistic.
 - e. Much of preaching today can be compared to a winter day – cold and short
 2. Church growth is more important than Biblical doctrine
- D. We can see it in the downgrade of worship today
 1. It seems that anything is allowed in the worship of God
 2. The Second Commandment is a confirmation that God rules how He will be worshipped.
Spurgeon’s Catechism
Question 46: What is forbidden in the second commandment?
Answer: The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His word.
 3. Worship is to be simple – this has always been the case.
 - a. This is why God gives us the elements of worship – prayer, Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the reading and preaching of the Word of God.
 - b. When we add to it with our own imaginations and creativity we destroy it.
Exodus 20:25 NAU - "If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it."
 - c. Worship has been refashioned to suit our own desires. It is geared towards reaching the people of our culture.
- E. Cultural Christianity has had such an impact today that it makes genuine Christianity appear strange and radically different.
 1. I once had a relative ask me “Are you still Baptist?”
 2. The fact we believe the 4th Commandment makes us offensive to many.
 3. The fact we are confessional makes us offensive to many

4. And when you expose the errors of modern cultural Christianity; if you dare try to tear down the altars, the response is often harsh and sometimes almost violent.
It is like the response of the townspeople upon seeing the altars of their idolatry torn down.
Judges 6:30 NAU - " Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has torn down the altar of Baal, and indeed, he has cut down the Asherah which was beside it."
5. We must not fear the face of man
Proverbs 29:25 NAU - "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted."

II. What is the cure and preventative of Christian Syncretism?

- A. We must be governed by the Word of God – alone
 1. Israel's problem was clearly stated at the end of the Book of Judges
Judges 21:25 NAU - " In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
 2. With Cultural Christianity beliefs and practices are received from many different sources – People choose their practices by personal preference. Some new thing is always being promoted.
 3. We must be governed by the Bible
- B. We must have a vital relationship with Christ
 1. The problem with Cultural Christianity is it is a religion void of Christ
2 Timothy 3:4-5 NAU - " lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."
 2. Genuine Christianity is Christ, period
1 Corinthians 2:2 NAU - " For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
- C. We must have a high and holy reverence of God
 1. Israel's sin was serving other gods
Cultural Christianity is serving another god
 2. Cultural Christianity is a rejection of the Biblical Christ – it is another Christ.
 3. The modern church has forgotten that God is God. They have turned evangelism into a man-centered work, worship into a man-centered activity, the church into a man-controlled institution.
 4. We must remember that God is God alone. He will have no rivals

Conclusion:

1. This means God expects His people to trust Him. To love Him - ALONE
Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NAU - "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
2. His church must follow Him alone. We must tear down the altars of our idols. That was the first priority for Gideon and it must also be ours.