

## EXPOSITION OF JUDGES

### Message #7

### Judges 6:1-24

Gary Phillips made an interesting observation years ago about the apostles God chose to use to turn the world upside down. Peter was known for his emotional instability; James and John were “sons of thunder” apparently in trouble with the juvenile division of the Galilean police; Thomas didn’t believe much of anything; Philip was somewhat of a dull, imperceptive guy (John 14:8), not the brightest crayon in the box; James the Less we don’t know anything about; Simon the Zealot was a former gang member; Matthew was a pro-Roman Jewish tax collector. The only one of the twelve who seemed to have a CEO business background was Judas (*Judges*, p. 93). If a personnel department was looking over resumes to determine who would make the best disciples of Jesus Christ, probably all but Judas would be eliminated. But God did not make His selection based on what the men were at the time, but based on what they would become when He got done with them.

One of the most encouraging things to see in the Scriptures is that God is a God who takes weak, insignificant, broken-down people and transforms them by His power. God knew all about us when He chose us. He knew about our weaknesses, our failures, our frustrations, our discouragements, our doubts, our fears, and our inadequacies. God does not say to us- I can’t use you because you are such a mess. What He says is- I can do great things for you and with you when you follow Me.

God initiates a relationship with us, and His goal is to transform us into becoming the most wonderful person we may be. Gary Inrig said that one “of the great truths of Scripture is that when God looks at us, He does not see us for what we are, but for what we can become, as He works in our lives” (*Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, p. 84). One great inspired illustration of this reality is the story of Gideon. What we learn is this:

**WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE CRY OUT TO GOD FOR HELP, GOD WILL RAISE UP SOME OF THE MOST UNLIKELY PEOPLE TO LEAD AND HELP HIS PEOPLE.**

There are six parts to this text which we want to see:

**PART #1** – God sovereignly makes His people miserable because of their sin. **6:1-6**

These verses tell the truth about Israel but they do not flatter Israel. God had given Israel great deliverance under Deborah and Barak and “the land was undisturbed for forty years” (Judges 5:31). However, during those forty years Israel had not become more spiritual. They started taking their blessings for granted. Instead of using their freedom and peace to worship God, love God, and live life in a God-honoring way, they once again did evil in the sight of God (**Judges 6:1**). Don’t overlook this - evil is done in the sight of the LORD. No one gets away with evil. It is always seen by God. It is always on full display before God.

**Because God's people were doing evil, God raised up a group of desert marauders led by Midian to oppress Israel economically for seven straight years (6:1).** The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah, his second wife, and they formed a coalition with the Amalekites, who were a nomadic tribe, and also sons of the east who were desert Arabs. Together they made life economically miserable for Israel.

The Midianites were so intimidating that the sons of Israel hid out in mountain areas and caves and defendable hills (6:2). **The Midianites had a great new weapon, the camel (6:5).** The camels not only looked scary when coming in an attack, but they made the Midianites very mobile. Those camels could go anywhere. They could travel for three to four days with a heavy load on their back and cover about three hundred miles without food or water. In fact, it is interesting that the American Army at one time started an experiment to use camels in the fight against the Indians, but the project was shelved when the Civil War broke out.

The Midianites were not interested in occupying the land permanently; they would just come in every year at harvesttime and invade the land (6:3) and set up their Gypsy-type camps all over the land, eat up all the food, and drink all the wine, and take all the animals and then leave until the next year (6:4). Kind of what some of our people do in the winter - they go South and raid the grocery stores in their areas and then come spring, they leave until the next year when they do it all over again.

Every year the Midianites would saddle up their camels and come into the Promised Land just like a bunch of locusts and pillage every area (6:5). The Midianites were so mobile and fast that they could sweep into Israel - cross deserts and the Jordan and they could take food, grain, vegetables, fruit and livestock and be gone just as soon as they came. **Verse 6** says that Israel was brought very low. When you are an agricultural people, nothing could be more depressing than this.

I believe one of the ways that God gets His people to turn back to Him is economic disaster. I also believe that this is exactly what God will do in the Tribulation with Israel. They will be so low on food that they will have to pray "give us this day our daily bread." God will let the nation Israel experience the horrors of the Antichrist until she once again turns to Him and His Son and then deliverance will come.

**PART #2 – God's people cry out to God for help. 6:6-7**

The verb "cry out" of found in **verses 6 and 7** is one that means to cry out to God and implore Him to help because you are in such a sad and sorrowful condition (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 251). **Finally in total desperation, Israel cried out to God (6:6b-7).**

**However, look carefully at verse 7; they are crying to the Lord because of Midian, not because of their sin.** It is true that one of the best things God's people can do when they are desperate is to cry out to God. When some intimidating enemy is hounding you, it is very right to cry out to God. However, if you really want total victory, don't forget to analyze yourself in the process. Perhaps the real enemy is our own sin. God at times will permit His people to hit bottom; and when He does, His people need to cry to Him.

**PART #3** – God sends His prophet to communicate His Word to His people. **6:8-10**

For the first time in Judges, God does not respond with immediate deliverance. Notice in **verses 8-10**, God sent His prophet. This prophet is not named and we do not know who he is. What we do know is he was God's prophet, and what we also know is that God's prophet reminded God's people of God's Word and he specifically exposed their sin. **He did not come first to comfort them; he came to confront them.** He brought six fascinating messages from God to give Israel:

- (**Message #1**) - God brought Israel out of Egypt and out of slavery. **6:8b**  
Their present existence was like that of slavery again.
- (**Message #2**) - God delivered Israel from the hands of the Egyptians. **6:9a**  
It doesn't matter how intimidating the enemy; it is nothing for God.
- (**Message #3**) - God delivered Israel from the hands of all their oppressors. **6:9b**  
God can deliver from Midian, the Amalekites and the Arabs.
- (**Message #4**) - God dispossessed Israel's oppressors from the land. **6:9b**  
God can and will rout Israel's oppressors out of her land.
- (**Message #5**) - God gave Israel the land. **6:9c**  
God is the One who has set the boundaries of where Israel's land will be.
- (**Message #6**) - God had told Israel that He was Israel's God and they need not fear any enemies or their false gods. **6:10a**
- (**Message #7**) - Israel has not obeyed God. **6:10b**

This prophet is calling things straight. He is not sugarcoating anything. Basically what this prophet is saying is God has all power to deliver you from anything, but you have not obeyed God. We do not even know what the response was by Israel to this prophet's confrontation. There is no record of a national repentance taking place. In fact, there is nothing in this message of this prophet that promises God will deliver them. What we will see is that God, in His amazing grace, would deliver them just because they cried to Him for help.

You may find yourself in life in a mess because you have made choices to disobey God and His Word. You may blatantly have chosen to do just the opposite of what God told you to do, and you may find yourself dominated by things that should never dominate you. If you are willing to cry to the Lord and ask for help, very likely you will see God do some amazing things.

**PART #4** – God sovereignly and Personally chooses Gideon to help His people. **6:11-12**

God sovereignly and graciously decided to deliver His people with the most unlikely character you would ever expect. The selection process begins with the appearance of "the angel of the LORD," who is none other than Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate state. This angel of the LORD came in the form of a man and sat under the oak tree in Ophrah. Ophrah was a city of Manasseh, west of the Jordan about sixteen miles north of Jericho. Ophrah was a woman in the family line of Abiezer (**6:24**; Joshua 17:2). (Talk about contemporary relevance; in chapters 4-5 we are introduced to a guy named Barak and in chapter 6 we are introduced to a city named after a woman named Ophrah).

According to **verse 11**, it was year number eight and it was harvesttime and a young man named Gideon was trying to figure out a way he could secretly save some of his crop from a Midianite raid.

If you would have tried to come up with a job description of your deliverer and look for some one with a resume who met the qualifications, Gideon would have been your last choice. In fact, you would never have even interviewed Gideon. What is interesting is that more space (100 verses) is devoted to Gideon in Judges than to any other leader. Second on the list is Samson (96 verses).

When we first meet Gideon in **verse 11**, he is threshing wheat by beating it with a stick in a wine press. Most of the time threshing was done on a huge wooden threshing floor by using a sledge pulled by oxen out in the open. This floor was typically located by a wheat field. He is physically pounding this himself because in this wine press he doesn't want any Midianite to see him. This shows us how desperate things were. Gideon was trying to hide what he was doing just to get a little food that would not be stolen. Not too many Midianites would think of looking for grain in a wine press because wine presses didn't hold that much.

According to **verse 12**, the angel of the LORD came to Gideon and told him, "The LORD is with you, valiant warrior." There is absolutely nothing at this time about Gideon that looked like he was a valiant warrior. He is not organizing a clandestine resistance movement. He is not training with weapons. He is afraid and in **verse 15**, he will mention some of his own inadequacies and insecurities. He looks like a scared, defeated, discouraged man, who is just trying to survive and hide some food in a wine press.

But God said two things to Gideon in **verse 12**: 1) The LORD is with you; 2) You are a valiant warrior. Think about this. Neither one of these things looked to be true when He said this:

- 1) There was nothing at this point of time that looked like the LORD was with Israel;
- 2) There was nothing about Gideon that looked like he was a valiant warrior.

But here is a critical lesson for us to learn about God and His work - **God does not look at what we presently are when He gives us His grace, God looks at what we will eventually become by His grace.**

Do you realize the implications of this? God can do powerful things with you and with this church not because of what we are right now, but because of what He sovereignly knows He will do with you and us in the next days.

The Apostle Paul had exactly that perspective of this for believers and for a church when he wrote I Thessalonians 5:23-24. God is able to sanctify us entirely not because of what we are, but because of what He will sovereignly do with us. God is able to use us at the highest level not because of who we are, but because of what He will sovereignly do.

When most people look at us, they see our flaws and our failures, but not God. God sees His own transforming power and possibilities. That is why He says to Gideon, you are a "valiant warrior."

**PART #5 – Gideon responds to God verbally . 6:13-16**

Now Gideon does not verbally respond in a very heroic way here. **Gideon is struggling with the same thing that many of God’s people struggle with, and that is he bases his faith and theology on his circumstances .**

He basically says, if the Lord is with us, why are things so bad? Why are our life circumstances so lousy if God is with us? What in the world am I doing in this wine press trying to get a little grain by stealth if Almighty God is with us?

He had absolutely no grasp of why God had done what He did or what God was even doing.

**In verse 13 He verbally responds three ways:**

- 1) Why has God allowed all of these things to happen to us if You are with us?
- 2) Why isn’t God performing delivering miracles for us if You are with us?
- 3) Why have You abandoned us?

Here is Gideon’s theology- if good things are happening to us God is with us, but if bad things are happening to us God has abandoned us. When you base your doctrine on how you feel, not on what God reveals, you can become very confused.

We know from several passages in the O.T. and the N.T. that God will not ever desert or abandon His people, if for no other reason than the fact that His name is on the line (I Samuel 12:22; Ezekiel 36:20-22, 32; Hebrews 13:5). However, God also reveals that He will discipline His people and humble His people to get them to turn back to Him (Isaiah 2:6; Hebrews 12:5-13).

God responds to Gideon’s diatribe in **verse 14** first by looking at him. Now when this angel “looked” at Gideon, two things come to mind about this look. First, Gideon is shooting off his mouth and saying God has abandoned us, and here is God sitting here talking to him. So he looks as if to say, “I can’t even believe what just came out of your mouth.” Second, He is looking not just at what Gideon was then, but what He was about to do with Gideon. Notice He immediately says go wipe out the Midianites and deliver Israel. Your strength is in the fact that “I have sent you.”

In **verse 15**, Gideon responds by reminding God that he was from the smallest tribe and he was the youngest in his father’s house. Gideon felt inadequate for this job. He thought this job is too big for me and I am too small for the job.

I believe it is important to see ourselves honestly. We do not ever want to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. We ought to know our limitations and admit them. There is real honesty here. God does not ever do much with delusional, arrogant liars. We need to be humble and honest before God.

But we also need to realize that all of the great people of God who have accomplished major things for God all felt inadequate. The fact is, our ability to do something for God is not ours; it is His. In fact, according to **verse 16**, God says to Gideon just that- you go do this because “I will be the One with you.”

**PART #6** – Gideon responds doubtingly and worshipfully . **6:17-24**

Now there are two requests Gideon makes to this angel of the LORD:

**Request #1** - Show me a sign . **6:17**

Gideon is a mental mess. First he says, if I have found favor or grace in your sight. If that weren't already true, you wouldn't have this angel of the LORD sitting under a tree talking to you. Now we will admit that if some stranger in human form showed up while you are at work and told you He was God and He would be with you so go take care of the Midianites, it would be a little unnerving and you might be a little suspect. However, as you are about to see, Gideon certainly does believe this is God speaking to him. Second, he says "show me a sign." Actually, he is about to see three signs.

**Request #2** - Stay and accept my worship . **6:18-19**

Gideon wanted to honor and worship this angel of the LORD so he asks Him to stay so he could prepare an offering.

The size of the offering in **verse 19** is impressive in view of the fact that there is a real shortage of food. This is a great sacrifice. Gideon had a heart for God and wanted to give Him the best offering he possibly could. According to **verse 20**, the angel of the LORD told Gideon to take the offering and lay it on the rock and pour the broth on it.

**(Sign #1)** - The angel of the LORD touches it with His staff and fire burns it. **6:21a**

**(Sign #2)** - The angel of the LORD immediately vanishes from Gideon's sight. **6:21b**

Gideon sees this and says I have just seen Adonai (Lord) Jehovah (GOD, LORD) face to face and he thought I am dead (**6:22**). He knew that Exodus 33:20 said "no man can see God and live." He is thinking I have just seen God and I am dead.

**(Sign #3)** - The angel of the LORD audibly speaks to Gideon in view of what he was thinking.  
**6:23**

There is no hint that Gideon even said this out loud. But of course God searches hearts and minds and He sees exactly what Gideon is thinking and a voice comes out of heaven assuring him he is safe. So **verse 24** ends the section by saying Gideon built an altar to worship God and named it YHWH/Shalom, Jehovah Peace. People, who are truly right with God, reverently worship God. What an amazing scene. What an unlikely choice. What a gracious God.

What Gideon says to every one of us is, we may be encouraged to know that when we have a hard time accepting ourselves or we think we can't amount to much because of our background, if we will obey God's Word, God can and will greatly use us. Our theology is not dictated by our circumstances. If things are good, God is sovereign. If things are bad, God is sovereign. He at times will permit things to come our way because He is using those things to take us from where we are now to what He knows He wants us to be.