

## Judges Ch 6

The story is told of a man who went to a psychiatrist and said, “doctor, you’ve got to help me. Everything has either gone wrong or is going wrong. I feel absolutely worthless. And all my friends tell me that I have a massive inferiority complex. Is there anyway that you can help me?” So the psychiatrist scheduled him an appointment and told him to come in and he’d run a series of tests on him and see what he could find after he’d evaluated them. So a week later after the tests the man came back and the doctor said, “friend, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is that we have proved and know that you don’t have an inferiority complex. There’s no doubt about that. But the bad news is you are inferior.”

Well, as Judges ch 6 opens, we find the children of Israel living once again under the dominion of a group of pagans around them, this time, the Midianites- an arrogant, brutal nomadic type of people. The 1<sup>st</sup> group of people recorded by the scriptures that had domesticated the camel, which gave them a huge advantage militarily speaking. Because camels are quite large and yet they’re very maneuverable in battle as well. And so what would happen is that the Midianites would (not be personally in Israel’s land per say in 1 on 1 oppression) but what they would do would be to wait until Israel had planted their harvest and about the time harvest time would come around and they’d gather the harvest and do all the work. Then the Midianites would come in by the 10’s and 10’s if not 100’s of thousands like locusts and take all their crops and lives stock and then bolt back out. And camels are perfect for that because they can hold hundreds of pounds a piece and go days with out water. So they’d move in take all that Israel owned basically, load up, and go and season after season, year after year this had been going on. And so Israel was in an extremely oppressive and poverty stricken predicament and so finally after 7 or so years of this Israel began to once again cry out to God. And so ch 6 will introduce Gideon to us, the judge that God will raise up to once again deliver Israel, but we’ll see that when the Lord comes to Gideon, He didn’t find a man who was so fed up that he was ready to go when the Lord said jump. O, he was fed up all right, but ready to go was another story, but 1 little side note that you may or may not find interesting. More space is dedicated, or devoted to Gideon in the book of Judges than any other Judge (some 95 vs) and Gideon is the only judge whose personal struggles with his faith is recorded. And so we’ll see a few encouraging lessons for us through the life of Gideon, he’s definitely a great encouragement to those of us who have a hard time believing that God could choose us for any relevant task or make anything of value from our lives. And we also see the wonderful principal of 2 Cor 12:9, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness,*” at work in his life. Well, the 1<sup>st</sup> vs introduces to us the reason that we see over and over again in this book for which Israel found themselves in servitude and really kind of enslaved indirectly by the Midianites. Because vs 31 of ch 5 tells us that after Deborah and Barak’s victory over the king of Canaan that the land had rest for 40 yrs.

Now when it says that the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, what it means is that they once again gave themselves over to serve the pagan gods, as long as Barak or Deborah was alive, the nation kept in check. But as soon as they were removed from the picture they once again gave themselves over to the Baal's and Ashtoreth's which to get down to the fact of the matter were the gods that would serve the appetites of their flesh or their fleshly desires.

And how many times we reprimand the children of Israel for such actions but what about us, maybe you decide that instead of reading your bible or coming to church some day, since the weather is so beautiful you're going to blow it off and do something else. Who are you serving, the appetite of your flesh, they looked to Baal for the weather, so as to have good crops and all. Maybe you can't believe that they'd worship the goddess of sex and fertility Ashtoreth or in another culture Venus, Ashtar, Easter, or Aphrodite, all the same pagan god. But yet you can't quit going to pornography sites on the internet, or some porn shop under the cloak of night thinking that no body knows what's happening in your life but God knows. And you've given yourself over to the god's that serve the appetites of your flesh. Sure you still come to church, they would often times seek to worship Jehovah right along side of Baal. I can't remember who it was, I think it was Elvis Presley who was asked why he wore like the star of David, and a crucifix and all these various religious symbols, and he said, I'm just making sure my basis are covered. And Israel would worship Jehovah or go through the religious rituals involved right along side the vile and disgusting acts of worship involved with these pagan gods, but the Lord your God is a jealous God, He said you shall have no other God but Me. The scriptures say, "*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*" And yet how often we give ourselves over to the gods that serve the appetites of our flesh, and the lesson here is that our flesh will always bring us into bondage.

Vs2-6

7 years of bondage, of trying to get it worked out for themselves, before they finally realized the futility of their efforts and cried out to God. You know I don't know what your struggle is tonight or what you may be in bondage to through the oppression of your flesh, but how long is going to take before you realize the futility of trying to work it out for yourself before you cry out to God. What is it that's in our nature that is so stubborn? I don't know why it is that we so desperately desire to work out our own issues in our own strength and often times just like the children of Israel it takes years before we find ourselves in a position of brokenness before God whereby we cry out to Him.

Vs7-10

Now thus far when Israel would cry out to the Lord, the Lord would raise up a judge; and He will this time as well, but before He sends them a judge, notice He sends them a prophet. And the message that he gives them is the same basic one that the Lord had given them once already before back in Ch 2 the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 vs.

You remember that the Lord had visited Israel in Bochim and said, *"I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"*

And now here they are reaping the consequences of their actions, and God is reminding them hey, we've been here before and you're not here due to any working of mine, they haven't overcome you because I've forsaken you, but rather because you've forsaken me. So many times we make choices and then when we begin to suffer the ramifications for those choices we want to blame God for the situation we find ourselves in. But the Lord is saying hey, you're not where you're at because I've forsaken you, you're the one who's forsaken Me. I've delivered you from sin, brought you up from bondage and oppression, have been nothing but good to you. But You have not obeyed My voice.

Vs11

Now here we see again another pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ as the Angel of the Lord takes a seat under the terebinth tree to check out what Gideon's doing. It's amazing how many times Jesus shows up in the OT as you begin to investigate that, you remember that in John ch 8 Jesus said that Abraham saw Him, well when did that happen, thousands of years transpired between Ab and Christ. But when you read Genesis ch 18 you read of an account where Ab and the Lord was hanging out prior to the destruction of Sodom, the Lord appeared to Jacob, He appeared to Moses, and Joshua, again He appeared and Bochim, and now here we see Him again getting ready to commission Gideon. But notice where we find Gideon, he was threshing wheat in the winepress. Now the wine presses were in the valleys because when they'd have a heavy load of grapes, they'd naturally carry these heavy bushels (or whatever they were called) of grapes downhill. But the threshing floors were exactly the opposite, because there was no real wind down there in the valleys, and so they'd place the threshing floors up on top of the hills so that as the wind would blow when they were threshing the wheat, it would blow the chaff away. But Gideon is down at the bottom of the hill threshing *his* wheat because he doesn't want to be seen by the Midianites, he's not only hiding, but he's scared. And one other thing that I'm sure he is and that's frustrated because he's threshing this wheat, and the chaff is no doubt flying everywhere but away, and so as he pitches the grain up, the chaff is coming down all over him, in his hair, in his clothes probably making him all itchy. I'd imagine he'd stare up from time to time at the hill top and think man this would be so much better if I were just up there, but the sting of the thought of the Midianites taking it all after he's worked so hard just adds insult to injury and makes him all the more frustrated as he's doing all this work. And so the picture that we're presented with as Gideon comes on the scene is that of a defeated, and discouraged individual who is filled with fear and doubt. We have a tendency to see this brave heart sort of character in our minds when we think of Gideon, and by God's grace that's what he'll become, but that's not at all how he started out and the condition that he was in when the Lord called him.

But The Lord's just kicking back watching all this and checking Gideon out unbeknownst to him. But one thing to sort of take mental note of is the fact that when this "Angel" whom we know to be (and will see later on) the Lord, begins to speak to Gideon there was nothing unusual in His appearance. He wasn't glowing, He didn't have a halo or wings, nor was He carrying a harp, so it's going to take Gideon a while to figure out Who it is that he's speaking to.

### Vs12

Now you have to picture this, here's Gideon, hiding out, knees knocking, fearful of the Midianites all dirty and itchy and this guy (as far as Gideon is concerned we know it's the Lord) but He makes this statement. (Repeat) Gideon probably looked around to see if He was speaking to someone else, because I know you're not talking to me.

But notice the way that the text lays out, it's not saying that he's mighty and so the Lord would be with him, it's say that the Lord is with him therefore he is mighty. You see when we look at one another and even ourselves we see all our wrinkles or flaws and imperfections, but God sees us as the finished product, that which He'll work in us to His glory. And we see God deal with people like this consistently throughout the scriptures. He comes to a 99 year old man named Abram and says, "Abram, I'm going to change your name. From now on you're going to be Abraham because I'm going to make you the father of a multitude."

You see God often finds people who have no real qualifying factors or personal points of favor for the Lord to work with so that He non-mistakably gets all the glory and he makes these people just the opposite so many times of what their natural character would be.

An impulsive, unstable emotional man is brought by his brother to Jesus, and Jesus just looks at him and says, "You are Simon, the son of Jonah, you shall be called a rock- Peter." And that's exactly what he became one of the pillars of the early church, and that's what's happening here with Gideon. The Lord was saying Gideon I know what you are. And I know your circumstances and all the rest but I'm not really concerned with who you are now because I'm going to do an awesome work in your life, and you're in reality a mighty man of valor. Not because somewhere way down deep you have it with in you, as a matter of fact that's what so often hinders the Lord, (people are too strong in their own strength for Him to use,) but because I'm with you.

### Vs13

Sounds like a man of great faith doesn't it? But what we saw pictured in actions back in vs 11 we're now hearing spoken in words in vs 13 these are the words of a discouraged and defeated man. O, if, why, where, and but; and he said there straight that he feels like the Lord has forsaken him. And of all the forms of discouragement this one has to be one of, if not the worst. For a believer to feel that God is not interested or that He's for some reason turned His back on them (as one commentator has said) "is to be reduced to a debilitating despair that crushes all hope out of life."

And that's where Gideon was when God began to deal with him. And how many times do we feel the same way? "If God is with me then why is everything falling apart and crashing around me and where are all these miracles that hear about in the bible and even in the lives of others? And we'll draw attention to the Lord's response but 1<sup>st</sup> I want you to again notice the fallacy of Gideon's perspective, he says, "the Lord has forsaken us." They had been given into the hands of the Midianites that much is true. But it wasn't because the Lord had forsaken them; it was because they had forsaken the Lord, we've already learned of that. We so often want to blame our situations on the Lord, but we sow our own seeds, and then we have the audacity to expect to be shielded from harvest time. Listen, it doesn't work that way, when we sow, we reap and that's what's happened here on a national level.

#### Vs14

How did the Lord respond? He didn't, He didn't answer any of his questions, He just gives Gideon the commission, and most of the time He does the same thing with us. We have all these questions, why is it going like this? What's going on, where's the Lord in this, and He just says, have I not sent you, get going, don't philosophize, theologize, question or criticize, just get going, because I've got a job for you. And what was the might that he was to go in? It wasn't by his might or his power, that only got him into a winepress, but by the Spirit of the Lord, (which we'll see) his might, his source of the strength, was the Lord. The Lord said, I will be with you and that my friends is the same source of strength and power that we have. What did Jesus say when He commissioned His disciples in Matt 28:19-20, He said, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" When the Lord commissions us, He goes not only before us, but with us as well, (what a comfort that is).

#### Vs15-16

Here we see the classic illustration of 1 Cor 1:26-29  
*"Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."*

Gideon was filled (it would seem) with a sense of total inadequacy. No confidence in his ability, which is exactly where he needed to be, that made him a prime candidate to be chosen of God. Time and time again in the scriptures we see God cutting away at mans self-confidence in order to bring him to the place where he'll admit that he's totally inadequate for the job God is calling him to. I would venture to say that there's not one major character in the word of God whom God did not bring to a deep sense of his own inadequacy. In vs 15 Gideon is basically asking, who am I? And in vs 16 God reaffirms him of the fact that it's not about who he was that wasn't the issue, the question was who am I (the Lord).

And I will be with you the Lord is saying, this reminds us of Moses' encounter with the Lord when he was commissioned, totally unqualified, and yet that's the very thing that qualified him, because he would be careful to give God the glory, because he *knew* that it wasn't him.

#### Vs17-19

Now remember that this is during intense poverty that Gideon is preparing all of this stuff and it was enough for a small feast. And it wasn't like a quick trip to burger king or something, this took some time, David said, I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing, why, because if it cost nothing, it means nothing. Gideon is offering up a sacrifice of worship to the Lord.

#### Vs20-21

Wouldn't you have loved to been there for that, what an incredible scene.

#### Vs22

Interesting, in vs 13 Gideon was frightened because he couldn't see the Lord in his situation, now he's terrified because he has. And the bible says that no man can see God and live and so he's terrified that now it's time for him to die, but he wasn't looking into the Fathers glory and so in vs 23 God comforts him.

#### Vs23-27

So he's learning, he trusts the Lord more now, but he still was fearful of man and so he did this by night, but what we need to understand here is that revival starts in you or in me. After revelation comes consecration after the Lord revealed Himself to Gideon, He said, hey, there's a problem in your family and it needs attended to. But revelation comes 1<sup>st</sup>, so many times people think well, I can't go to church today things aren't right. But before the consecration we need the revelation. And so often Satan whispers to us, you're not consecrated, you're unworthy of the revelation, but that's like saying when you're sick don't go to the doctor until your well again or to a hungry person don't come to the table until you're full. We come into the presence of God for the revelation which inspires both motivation and consecration, it wasn't until Gideon had spent time with the Lord that the Lord told Gideon hey, there's a problem in your family, there's an altar that needs tore down.

#### Vs28-32

Wise counsel here, his dad defended him and said, hey, if Baal is god then let him defend his self, he shouldn't need your help and so they all thought, well, I guess that's true and so they called Gideon "Jerubbaal" which basically means Baal's antagonist or let Baal plead. In other words let Baal defend himself, and by the way, we'd probably stay out of a lot of trouble if we'd heed this counsel ourselves.

How many times do you find yourself in the awkward position of defending God? God can take care of Himself, He's a big boy we don't need to worry about Him.

#### Vs33-35

Notice vs 34, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the empowerment for service, for boldness to do God's will, you see it's not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts. And when God's Spirit is moving (unless you're Jeremiah) people will respond and get behind you, and that's what happened there in vs 35, the people gathered behind him.

#### Vs36-40

So before Gideon launched out on this "mission impossible" he sought last minute confirmation, and here we have this principal of fleecing the Lord, and we don't really have time to get into it, we'll begin there next week (Lord willing), but there's a difference between honest doubt and dishonest doubt. Some people really want confirmation and assurance and other people want to argue and you can tell by the way they present the question. But for now suffice it to say that I would be very careful when it comes to fleecing the Lord and asking God to bow to your will rather than you being obedient to His.

And so the backdrop is ready, stage is set and next week, Gideon moves into battle.