

People of the Promise: Gideon: When Little Is Much Judges 6-7

Introduction

NJFK—a violin plays music only if someone with the skill plays it.

Hebrews 11:32-34

³² And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

These “heroes” are clearly imperfect men, irritating and disappointing, but God used them—and they trusted God. *We are ever tempted to make human heroes larger than life—it seems more fair that way. But when we do we set ourselves up for disillusionment and fear. God is the Hero of these events. These men, with all their imperfections, just leaned on Him.*

1. Brought Low by God for Sin (Judges 6:1-10)

¹ The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. ² And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. ³ For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. ⁴ They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. ⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in. ⁶ And Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD. ⁷ When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, ⁸ the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. ⁹ And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. ¹⁰ And I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in

whose land you dwell.' But you have not obeyed my voice."

2. Called by God to an Impossible Task (Judges 6:11-16)

11 Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor." **13** And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." **14** And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" **15** And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." **16** And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."

Questions, so many questions

If . . . why, where, how—weakest clan, least in father's house

Answer to all the questions: I will be with you.

God is the hero, not Gideon.

3. A Sign that God Is Speaking (Judges 6:17-24)

Fear of God

Peace of God

Judges 6:22-24a

²² Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." ²³ But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." ^{24a} Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace.

4. First Things First (Judges 6:25-32)

Start with destroying the altar to Baal (remember that this was why God had used the Midianites to bring them low)

We often want relief from the consequences of our sin without dealing with the sin that produced the consequences.

5. The Many Given by God to the Few (Judges 6:33-7:25)

Judges 6:34

But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him.

The Fleece (Judges 6:36-40)—God kindly puts up with Gideon’s need for reassurance.

Judges 7:2-4a

² The LORD said to Gideon, “The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’ ³ Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.’” Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.

^{4a} And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many.

Judges 7:7

And the LORD said to Gideon, “With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home.”

Too many for me to **give** the Midianites into their hand (from 32,000 to 300) No boasting—we did it!

6. Strengthened by God against Fear (Judges 7:9-11a)

9 That same night the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand. **10** But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant. **11a** And you shall hear what they say, and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp."

Judges 7:12-15a

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. **13** When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade. And he said, "Behold, I dreamed a dream, and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian and came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat." **14** And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp." **15a** As soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped.

7. The Enemy Turned by God against Themselves (Judges 7:19-25)

The 300 were armed with trumpets, pots, and torches—other battle gear is not mentioned.

They cried out “a sword for the LORD and for Gideon.”

The 300 blew trumpets and broke pots and held torches, **but God did the fighting**—He caused the Midianites to self-destruct.

Judges 7:22a

When they blew the 300 trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army. And the army fled.

The Israelites pursued the Midianites who fled. They called out the men of Ephraim, who captured and killed the two princes of Midian. A total rout.

Conclusion

Where has the Lord promised victory, and to what task has He called you—with all your imperfections—to do? Forsake your pride and abandon your fear. God is the Hero, not you.

Matthew 28:20b

Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.