

Gideon, Part 1: Do Something

Judges 6:1-24

Back in the late 1940's and early 50's Hollywood was mass producing western movies. As part of their production, these film companies had a regular crew of cowboy musicians to do the back ground music and occasionally appear in the movie doing one or two of their songs. One of the best was Stuart Hamblen, a talented singer/songwriter with a reputation for hard drinking and hard living. Almost overnight he changed. Stuart came to Christ at the Los Angeles Billy Graham Crusade in 1949.

A young actor named John Wayne asked, "Stuart, what's your secret?" His answer became the basis for a song. "John," he answered, "It is no secret what God can do."

The chimes of time ring out the news--another day is through.
Someone slipped and fell, was that someone you?
You may have longed for added strength, your courage to renew.
Do not be disheartened, for I bring hope to you

There is no night for in His light, you'll never walk alone;
You'll always feel at home, wherever you may roam.
There is no power can conquer you while God is on your side.
Just take Him at His promises, don't run away and hide.

It is no secret what God can do.
What He's done for others, He'll do for you.
With arms wide open, He'll pardon you.
It is no secret what God can do.

As we begin a series of messages on the role of Gideon as one of the most prominent in the line of judges in this chaotic time period of Israel's up and down struggles with idolatry and apostasy, we see that God wants Gideon to recognize his own inadequacy, but put his confidence in God's presence and enablement. This requires a process. It doesn't happen all at once.

We start this new cycle in Israel's history where the Book of Judges starts each cycle, with the sin of God's people.

I. SIN – FORGETTING THE LORD (6:1a)

We hear that recurring phrase: "**Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.**" Their personal and national life was characterized by apostasy and idolatry. Later in the chapter we are going to see that Gideon's family has actually set up a center of Baal worship – an altar that the Lord will tell Gideon to tear down. Despite the forty years of peace and prosperity after the success of Deborah and Barak over the Canaanites, Israel again forgot the Lord.

II. (:1b-6a) SUFFERING –BROUGHT LOW BY ENEMIES

So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years,

2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains.

3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.

4 Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey.

5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it.

6 So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites

The Midianites were desert Bedouins who were constantly a problem for Israel. When Moses came through the wilderness and wanted to go up to Jericho, he had to go through what is now modern Jordan, through the land of the king of Moab. But there he met the Midianites and the Moabites. They gathered together against Moses and the Israelites and hired a prophet named Balaam to call down curses on Israel. But Moses attacked them won a great victory but they did not completely destroy the Midianites. So they continue to harass and oppress Israel.

They repeatedly ravage their villages and crops for a seven year period that must have seemed like an eternity.

Once again we see that God is chastising and disciplining His children. He was using the Midianites to wake His people up from their spiritual backsliding and rebellion.

The Israelites were forced to hide away in caves and strongholds in the mountains. They were hiding because each time they turned around the Midianites would come and harass them. The Israelites would work all spring, begin raising their new sheep, oxen and donkeys, thinking maybe this year they would make it. But it wasn't to be. Some lookout on a hill would shout, "Oh, oh! Here they come. Back to the caves!" These enemies were like locusts, so numerous they could not be counted. In fact, later we are told that there was an army of 135,000 of them. So here are the people of God--living in caves in the ground. **Israel was brought very low**

III. SUPPLICATION AND A WORD FROM THE LORD (6:6b-10)

and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.

7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites,

8 that the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage;

9 and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land.

10 Also I said to you, "I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.' "

So Israel cried to the Lord and the Lord sent a prophet. The scripture doesn't give us the prophet's name, just his message. God sends a prophet because Israel needs more than relief from their enemies; they need to understand why they are oppressed. This anonymous prophet:

A. Reminds them that the Lord is their deliverer.

The prophet says, "I need to review some truth for you: The Lord, the God of Israel, is the one who brought you out of Egypt. He is the one who got you out of

slavery, who dispossessed your enemies, who gave you land you never worked for and farms you never plowed.” The principle is this: when you are in trouble, oppressed and afflicted, remember who God is. He is the savior, the redeemer, the deliverer.

B. Repeats the Lord’s commandment.

The prophet reminds them of the first commandment, verse 10, **“I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.”**

C. Reproaches them for their rebellion.

The last part of verse 10, **“But you have not obeyed My voice.”** Literally they had not heard, not listened to God’s voice.

There is a basic principle here: We were never meant to be slaves to sin. We are meant to be servants of Jesus Christ, listening to His voice, walking in obedience before him.

Just as we don’t know this prophet’s name, we also don’t know who his audience was in Israel. But I have a feeling that we are going to meet one of those who had heard the message, Gideon.

III. SALVATION – THE CALLING OF GIDEON (6:11-24)

The Lord prepares his deliverer. But his deliverer does not know he is a deliverer because he is doing what all the other Israelites are doing--hiding.

A. The Circumstances of the Calling (6:11)

11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.

The **"angel of the Lord"** appears. As we see from other scripture, this angel appears to be the preincarnate Christ in human form. He comes up to Gideon while he is beating out wheat in a wine press. Normally you would thresh your wheat on the top of the hill in the wind, not at the base of the hill in a winepress. Gideon is hiding for the seventh year in a row.

B. The Challenge of the Calling (6:12)

Then verse 12, **“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!"”**

Can't you see Gideon lift up his head and say, "You must have the wrong wine press! I'm Gideon. I'm no might man of valor! Are you sure you're in the right place?"

“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. He is in the business of taking weak, insignificant people, and transforming them by His presence in their lives.” - Gary Inrig.

So Gideon latches on to the phrase, **“The Lord is with you.”** God’s promise to be with us should be all that we need; should answer all of our questions and objections – but God is patient with us. The Lord understands that it is a process as we grow in our maturity and our ability to live in light of God’s presence with us.

C. The Confusion of the Calling (6:13)

13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told

us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

The message from the angel reminds Gideon of the message from the prophet. Gideon says to the angel, "By the way, where is the Lord? Where are all His miracles?" Gideon knows the Lord has turned His people over to their enemies. Israel forgot God, but God had not forsaken Israel.

A little girl was listening to her mother tell some Bible stories about great people like Moses, Joshua, Samson, and Daniel. Finally, she turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, you know, God was much more exciting back then."

That was Gideon's attitude. He looked around at the terrible times in which he was living—the oppression, the poverty, the pain—and he wonders "God where are you?"

Matthew West wrote a song that expresses Gideon's feelings:

I woke up this morning
Saw a world full of trouble now
Thought, how'd we ever get so far down
How's it ever gonna turn around
So I turned my eyes to Heaven
I thought, "God, why don't You do something?"

Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of
People living in poverty
Children sold into slavery
The thought disgusted me
So, I shook my fist at Heaven
Said, "God, why don't You do something?"

He said, "I did, I created you"
If not us, then who
If not me and you
Right now, it's time for us to do something
If not now, then when
Will we see an end
To all this pain
It's not enough to do nothing
It's time for us to do something

That was God's commission to Gideon, "I created you!"

D. The Commissioning of the Calling (6:14)

14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

go in the strength associated with confidence in the Lord's enabling presence with you; the divine commissioning brings with it implied strength for the task at hand

Inrig: Hudson Taylor once said, "All of God's great men have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them; they counted on His faithfulness." That is the divine solution to discouragement – the truth of the omnipresence and adequacy of God.

E. The Complaint of the Calling (6:15)

15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

Gideon had to come to an end of himself where he saw himself as bankrupt and unable to accomplish anything for God; but too often we take that mindset and transfer it over to God as if He cannot use us to accomplish anything

Important Principle: God's Power is best seen through accomplishing the impossible through the transformed weakness of men. Often God calls us because of our weaknesses, not just in spite of them.

F. The Comfort of the Calling (6:16)

16 And the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

Lord keeps coming back to that fundamental promise, **"I will be with you."**

Gideon says very clearly that he can't do it," but the Lord says to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man." It is the whole principle of "I in you and you in me."

There is a beautiful principle here: We were never meant to live our lives hopelessly, for ourselves We are meant to die to ourselves so that Christ can live' his life in and through us. The Lord says, **"I will be with you."**

But Gideon asks for a sign, for something that would prove that God was with him. God is about to do that.

G. The Confirmation of the Calling (6:17-21)

17 Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me."

18 Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."

19 So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.

20 The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

21 Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

Gideon prepares a feast in time of famine; a feast that became a sacrifice. God in his grace encourages his deliverer and accommodates him by giving him a supernatural sign.

H. (:22-24) The Conclusion of the Calling

22 Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord. So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of the Lord face to face."

23 Then the Lord said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die."

24 So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Now the fire from the rock consumed the meal, Gideon recognizes that it is indeed the Lord, and he knows that anyone who sees God face to face will lose his life. Gideon began to fear God more than he feared the Midianites. He realized that he had argued with the living God. And wonderfully, when the fear of God began to overtake Gideon, the peace of God began to surround his heart. As Gideon feared the living God, God said, "Peace be with you." And he named the place "The Lord is Peace."

"Nothing is more assuring than God's 'I will be with you'; nothing is more overwhelming than the fact that it is God who says it." (Dale Ralph Davis).

Gideon is going to find that what God did for others, He can do for and through you.

In the words of Matthew West again,

I'm so tired of talking
About how we are God's hands and feet
But it's easier to say than to be
Live like angels of apathy who tell ourselves
It's alright, "somebody else will do something"

Well, I don't know about you
But I'm sick and tired of life with no desire
I don't want a flame, I want a fire
I wanna be the one who stands up and says,
I'm gonna do something"

What about you? Do you have the fire of God in your life? If so, God is calling you to do something. We are the salt of the earth, we are the city on a hill. But we will never change the world by ignoring our sin and hiding in caves. Come out of hiding. Confess your sin. Accept God's forgiveness and the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for you. Believe the in Lord.

God is with us. And it is no secret what God can do.