

God Seeks End Time Soldiers of the Cross

by Al Whittinghill

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being usable by God, highlighting the need to pass the test of unconscious moments when we are not aware we are being tested. It calls for a life of conviction, where self-pleasing and crisis-driven motivations are replaced by a God-pleasing, conviction-led life. The speaker urges the audience to be holy, sanctified through truth, and to follow the example of Jesus in every aspect of life.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, John 17:17, Isaiah 6:8, Amos 5:24, 1 Peter 1:16, John 13:15, Revelation 3:19, James 1:5, Hebrews 7:25, Ephesians 2:10

Topics: "Usability by God", "Living a Conviction-Led Life"

Description

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Transcript

About the time I went back to the house that I grew up in as just a little kid. Mom was a single mom and she raised me there. In the backyard, there was this huge tree.

I remember as a kid, I used to climb it. So, over the years, I'd lost touch of it, but one day when I was in that city, I went back to that place and looked at it. And I remember thinking, I said, I thought it was bigger.

I thought it was bigger. You know, these trees, just a small little tree now, and it's gotten bigger. But I was thinking, that's what it's going to be like when we get to the Lord's presence.

And we look back at our whole life and we'll say, I thought it was bigger. All the things we invest in and put all our priorities in time that seem so urgent and big are going to be much, much more insignificant in that day. So, we've come to this last night and we've talked about repentance.

We've talked about forsaking evil, turn from evil and begin to do good. We've talked about your sins being blotted out, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. We've talked about intercession and how as we are given a heart by God to share in His nature, that He puts inside of us the very emotions of God whom we pray.

And we can pray with His groanings, the Spirit of God, and pray with real importunity and join in with Him. And then last night we spoke about becoming an intercessor and standing in the gap by the leadership of God. Well, 2 Corinthians 16, 9 says, For the eyes of the Lord go back and forth to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is fully His.

God is on search. Sometimes we act like we have to twist His arm for Him to use us. And we say, Lord, use me.

That's why He left you here, if you're a believer. Instead of drowning you at baptism, He wants you to be used of Him in His glorious purposes. And so what He wants us to do is understand that the factor is not that Lord use me, but Lord make me usable.

That's the key. That's the key. So He wants us to be ambassadors for Christ, channels of revival, world changers, history shapers, end time soldiers of the cross.

And you know, not a lot of people are doing that. And He's seeking for those who will worship Him truly in spirit and in truth according to His will. So we live in days of real change, unprecedented change.

And we all know it. I think we can tell what's happening. And there's a nervousness in the hearts of people that you really talk to and ask.

They know that things are going on. God just won't use anybody in these days. He only uses those that are usable.

Well, let me just pray with you. Father, in Jesus' name, make us usable. Show us what it means to be found by Your glorious, seeking heart and putting us in the center of what You've laid hold of us for.

May we be laid hold of and may we choose to walk in what You've laid hold of us for. And we pray for tonight as we leave these meetings that the Lord Himself will be pleased with what He sees in our hearts. And we thank You in advance in Jesus' name.

Well, I want to talk tonight about the kind of man or woman that God will use in the midnight hour of a nation. And maybe this might not be our midnight hour, but it certainly does feel like it. We were just talking about that the other day.

And what kind of woman or man will God choose to use in the midnight hour? Well, we're going to go to the book of Judges tonight. If you have your Bibles, I wish you'd turn there and look at chapter 1 for a moment. You can just write these numbers down.

But it was 1250 B.C. There's more time that passes in the book of Judges than almost any other book in the Old Testament. It's one-fourth of the history of the Old Testament. Did you know that? And in the book of Judges we are meant to learn things.

It was a dark hour. It had been 200 years since they had crossed into the promised land. But a lot can happen in 200 years.

Just look at America. A lot can happen to move people away from the truth. So this is a striking parallel, what we're going to look tonight, to our day.

Here's a nation that's wonderfully blessed by God. He has demonstrated over and over again their wonderful heritage. They're in the promised land, but they're not experiencing the promised life.

Their hearts are tricked and moved away. Contradictions abound, just like in our day. And the people have been called to utterly defeat the enemies.

In chapter 1 you see nine times it says it, they did not utterly drive them out. Nine times. They did not utterly drive them out.

They put up with it. They drove the enemies up into the hills, and they would stay up there until they came down to really ransack them and create problems. So you don't just kind of push problems aside.

You have to do what the Lord says and really deal with it. He says utterly defeat. This battle is perpetual.

It's meant to be ongoing. And you see what was happening was compromise. Now compromise is never done out of ignorance.

Compromise is always a sin against light. For a believer, when you have light and you compromise, it's not ignorant. There's something else you can call your ignorance stuff, but not compromise.

It's my fault. So during this time of national disgrace and humiliation, God wants us to see something in this. Why it was happening.

And I think you'll find remarkable parallels to our day. The results of compromise in the parents is corruption in the children. And you see in Judges chapter 2 verse 10, it says also all that generation were gathered to their fathers, and there arose another generation after them that knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

So compromise in a family will result in corruption in the children. So we're coming tonight to chapter 6. There are seven cycles of sin and declension, disobedience, and then finally seven times it says they cried unto the Lord, and the Lord moved in in real mercy. The Lord leaned on them and they were feeling the pain of it and the sorrow in their heart.

So God is seeking to arrest the attention of this nation. And this is the fourth cycle down. And you see in Judges chapter 6 verse 1, let's read it together.

The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. And the hand of the Midianites, of Midian which means contention, prevailed against Israel. And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them dens that are in the mountains and caves.

They moved into the hills like those that God was wanting to get out. And they became like the world in a sense. And so it was when Israel had sown their seed that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites and the children of the east, and they came up against them.

They let them grow the food and they said now we'll take it. And they encamped against them, and they destroyed the increase of the earth until you come to Gaza. And they left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkeys.

So they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came like grasshoppers for multitude. For both they and their camels were without number, too vast a number. And they entered into the land to destroy it.

Well see I see these influences coming in to the nations throughout history. The nation that forgets God will be turned to hell. All nations that forget God it says.

And so you see here Israel was greatly impoverished, verse 6, because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel, here it is, they cried to the Lord. It's a strong word.

And so it came to pass when the children of Israel cried to the Lord because of the Midianites that the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel, which said to them, Smile, God loves you. No, he didn't say that. Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt and brought you forth out of the land of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hands of all that oppressed you.

I drove them out from before you. He's rehearsing the blessings. And gave you their land.

And I said to you, I'm the Lord your God. Fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. And here it is.

But you have not obeyed my voice. You have not obeyed my voice. And so God always, in the midnight hour of a nation, chooses a man.

Look back and you'll see. Whether it be a Moses or an Aaron or it can be anybody. But God chooses Elijah.

He chooses people and he uses them. And so here in verse 11, And there came the angel of the Lord. And most people would agree this is a pre-incarnate appearance.

A theophany, they call it, of the Lord Jesus. Because of what is said later you'll see. But there came the angel of the Lord.

And sat under an oak, which is an ophra, which means dust. That pertains to Joash the Abesarite. That's Gideon's dad.

And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Now when you're by the winepress there's no wind. You can't thresh wheat without wind.

It's like the church trying to do her work without wind. You can't do it. You can't thresh wheat.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. Well he didn't seem like a mighty man of valor, did he? I mean not at that time. And Gideon says to him, here's the language of unbelief.

See if you see some related things. O my Lord, O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this fallen on us? And where are all his miracles, which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt? But, oh if, why, where, but. We've said that a lot.

Lord, he says, now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us to the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him and says, Go in this your strength. And what's his strength? And the Lord shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have not I sent thee? There's his strength right there. Have not I sent thee? And I'm going to go with you, as you'll see in a minute what he says. And he says to him, O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my family's poor, and I'm the least in my father's house.

God is never limited by the things we limit, our service and our being his, that we use as excuses. Oh, if, why, where, but, if. And the Lord says to him, Surely I will be with you, and you will smite the Midianites as one man.

You and I together will do this as one man. And he says to him, If I have found grace in your sight, then show me a sign. That's what we always want, a sign, it does seem to say.

But, you see, God says to us three times in this book, he says, In those days there was no king in Israel. And it says, But every man did what was right in his own eyes. That's what's happening in America.

There's not a real lordship in the church. There's not a real giving the Lord all that he is, you see. And the result of this is tragic.

Everyone doing what seems right to them. Every way a man seems right in his own eyes, but the Lord tests the spirits, it says in the scriptures. There is a way that seems right to a man, but it ends in death.

Proverbs 14, 12. Proverbs 21, 2. I said every way a man is right in his own eyes. So we have a whole society of man-centered people.

In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes. Compromised from one generation to another. And they know not God or any of His mighty works.

So, you see, what was happening is they were doing things rationally, but it was wrong, it wasn't right. They did it all by what they thought. They were sincere, but they were sinful.

And it was a day of individualism and moral relativity. Just like today. Everybody was going their own way and there was no absolutes.

And they were thrown into what they can do to survive. And so all these cycles, you see them happening in the book of Judges, and it's a pattern throughout history, to a country like England or some other place, or Switzerland, that's known God on some level with a church there that was used of God, and there's been a great drift. And what happens is, it's what happens here in these seven cycles.

First of all, when you know the Lord and you know about what He wants, and you know the truth, there comes apathy. And apathy is when you know the truth, but you don't bother to walk in it. Apathy.

And if that continues, this apathy, what will happen then is that if you do that, then will come apostasy. That's when you know the truth and you dare to do the opposite. That's what's happening in our churches.

Apathy has led us to apostasy, and if you keep doing that in nation after nation, and in family after family, and in church after church, apathy, you know the truth, but you don't stir yourself up to walk in it, then comes apostasy. You know the truth, but you dare to do these things that God says He hates, because

you think you're just going to be fine doing it. Finally comes anarchy.

And this is repeated seven times in Judges. Anarchy is when nobody knows the truth anymore, and everybody does what they think. These people demand their individual rights.

It doesn't matter what you do in your house, you're on your own, and everybody just kind of goes along. If it feels good, do it. And a society based upon man and not God.

So the outward becomes the most important. The things that they have, the things that they grow, and it's a society based on man. So man's at the center, and God says, I want you to realize this.

So the nation that forgets God will be turned to hell. So God sold them into the hand of the enemy. He wants to arrest our attention, and His answer to the problem is to choose a man of God.

Now, Gideon didn't finish well. Later, after all of this, he left this off. But in these verses 7 to 10, you see, when they cried to the Lord, God gave a deliverer.

And the real problem is not the Midianites, but sin. Just like the real problem in America is not the White House. It's sin.

And it's the sin in the church. Not just the lost, but the sin in the church. And sin's results are hard.

They're a cruel taskmaster. So grace found Gideon. Gideon didn't see himself as a man of valor, but you see the language of unbelief, as we read there in verse 13, Oh, if, why, where, but.

And the first thing that has to happen after he really makes it right with God is you have to take it home to your house. After God chooses him, he says, take it home to your house. And so you see, in verse 13, it says, well, it says verse 24, sorry.

Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and he called it Jehovah Shalom Peace. And to this day, it's an offer of the Abazarites. And it came to pass, verse 25, the same night, that the Lord says to him, take your father's young bull, even the second bull of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the grove that's beside it.

See, they had altars behind their house. And this was an altar to Baal. His dad was known in the city.

And so here's a believer who's got a dad who's an unbeliever. And you think that if he goes and casts down the altar and attacks it, that it'll be the end. So he built an altar to the Lord, thy God, upon the top of this rock, verse 26, in the ordered place.

And take the second bull, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which you have cut down. So Gideon took ten of his servants, and he did as the Lord said to him. But so it was, because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, but he did it by night.

I've got it in my margin, but he did it. He was terrified. He was terrified to do it.

The enemy was there, and the people in the city. So he takes it home to his home first. And so when the men of the city, verse 28, rose up in the morning for their pagan quiet time, behold, the altar of Baal was cut down, cast down, and the grove that was cut down was by it.

And the second bull was offered on the altar that was built. And they said to one another, Who has done this thing? It's just like you see today there. Who dared to say this? Who dared to do this? Who would dare to come against this? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash, has done this thing.

Then the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son, that he may die. Now he thought his father would be against him. But when his father saw him obeying the Lord, it melted his heart.

And he says, before all these people, he came out and he says to those that stood around him, verse 31, Will you plead for Baal? Will you save Baal? Can't he plead for himself? Let him be put to death, while it's still morning. If Baal is God, then let him plead for himself because somebody cast down his altar. See this is really, this is brave.

This is cheeky. And therefore on that day they started calling him Jerob Baal. You know what they mean by that? It's like Baal Buster.

That's what it means. Baal Buster. From then on he was known as Baal Buster.

Saying let Baal plead against him. Now when you get serious like this and take it home, and cast down the altar of Baal, the enemy seems to know. He doesn't mind if we're lukewarm.

He doesn't mind, he'll let us go on in our lukewarmness. But here we see that the enemy seems to know in verse 33. Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east gathered together and went over and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

This is where the last great battle will be. But the spirit of the Lord, Labasa is the Hebrew word. It means to put on like a coat.

The spirit of the Lord put on Gideon like a coat. And he blew a trumpet and all of Ebiezar gathered around him. So he sent messengers all up through Manasseh and he went through the land blowing the horn saying they've come out to fight.

We need people who are serious. The opposition of the enemies come against us. It's almost like we sense the cheekiness of the enemy and the impudence of the enemy in our day.

There's such an antagonism and a brand new ability to come against people on every side for doing the slightest thing. You get accused and inflammatory talked about. But you see the world will always tolerate a lukewarm church.

But when we get serious like Gideon was made serious about obedience, then you become a bullseye. And that is what happened when the Midianites came out and they aggressively came out by the thousands. And well there's about 135,000 of them that came out.

And they had camels without number. The Israelites were poor. They didn't have anything hardly at all.

And so when the enemy comes in like a flood in the days ahead, we have God to raise up a standard. How does he answer? Well the spirit of God put on Gideon. The spirit of God put on Mike.

The spirit of God put on Al. Put on Brother Roberts like a coat. And he shows himself strong through us.

And so this is what the Lord desires. So as the trumpet sounds up in the northern part where he blows it, it's a general assembly. It's like someone coming through and going pa pa pa pa.

Come and defend mother and apple pie. Come and defend Israel. We're the people of God.

These people claim to belong to God. He's saying listen, we want you to join the battle of the Lord to defend God and country and wife and children. It's like the person that's a patriot only or comes in with a nationalistic view of what it means.

We should be for our nation. But it's not religious patriotism that'll save us. It's rousing and it's very stirring and it's highly motivating and it's emotional.

And everyone has the initial chance to respond. If things get hard in this nation, there'll probably be a very rousing call to the visible church to join in to defend God and country and all the rest. Come and be part of it.

And so people come and they follow. And they look at chapter seven. Then Gideon, then Jeroboam, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him rose up early and pitched beside the well of Herod.

Now Herod means trembling. It's a little, if you've been to Jezreel and you'll see a hill there, Gilead. And this is where 32,000 Jewish people that aren't armed very well go and make their camp on that.

And the enemy is there, 135,000. And the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. Now if you ever go there, you'll see that it would be a scary thing because you see they both know they're both there.

The enemy knows that these 32,000 people are there. And they're going, we're gonna just wipe the desert with them. And the Israelites know that Midian is there.

And there's quite a terrific moment. The crowd comes out, 32,000, and they're all there. And suddenly as they're there, and they look at this, reality dawns.

And they say, this is going to cost me. This is gonna cost me more than I'm willing to pay and I can't afford it. So Gideon says to them, and the Lord says to Gideon, that the people, verse two, are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites to their hands.

Lest Israel say, evoke themselves against me saying, my own hand has saved me. To the 32,000, and the odds are not good. They're like, well, they're four times as many Midianites.

And all of a sudden when he says that, he says, quoting from Deuteronomy, now therefore and proclaim in the ears, verse three, of all the people saying, whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and leave early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people, 22,000 people, and there remained 10,000. Two thirds of his army leave, and the Midianites know it.

You're not gonna have 22,000 men leave without the enemy knowing it. And so you see that self-preservation sent these first initial, there was the crowd who responded to the emotion and to the outward stuff, and they came out and said, let's defend our country, let's do all these things. But then when they started to count the cost and realized that it would cost them everything, they left it, and they said, according to Deuteronomy, we can go home.

So they went home to Mama. That's what they did. They left the trenches and went back to the tent at home.

So he says, if you're afraid, go and go back. You're free to do that. So there's a lot of people like that today.

I mean, a lot of people are like that kamikaze pilot who flew 30 missions. You're totally involved, but you're not really committed. See, the church is like that.

We fly all these missions, we do all these things, but we don't really lay our lives down as we do it. So the crowd has gone, and the courageous remain. These are people that are willing to die for what they believe, and they're much fewer.

They're 10,000 men, less than one out of three of the original, full of courage, ready to fight and suffer and die, willing to face hardship. But the odds are now 14 to one. That's not good.

And you can imagine what Gideon was like thinking this. Read verse four. And the Lord says to Gideon, the people are still too many.

If I had used 10,000, they would begin to say, Israel is tough. We can beat anybody. It's a point of pride.

But so when they're down to these 10,000, he says, the people are still too many. Bring them down to the water. See, that's what God always does.

He brings them down. He brings us down. Come down to the water, the well of trembling, and I will test them or try them there for you.

And it shall be that whoever I say to you, this one will go with you, then he will go with you. And whoever I say to you, this one shall not go with you, the same shall not go. And here they are facing a battle with such odds.

You can imagine the 14 to one odds. They got their little armor on. And he brings them down.

The scriptures say, beware of the archers in the place of the drawing of waters. I mean, these Midianites could have picked them all off. He brought them down to the water, bring them down.

And there they go down to the water. The people, verse five. And the Lord said to Gideon, everyone that laps of the water with his tongue as a dog laps, he you'll set by himself, and likewise, everyone that bows down upon his knees to drink.

So here you are facing a battle. It's like before you run the Boston Marathon. And they come to this water.

They forget everything out there. And they put their head down in the water and they lap the water just by being their heads in it. Others, 300 soldiers, it says here, they put their hands down in the water.

And they go, they lap like a dog. And the Lord says to Gideon, he says, the number of them that lapped, verse six, putting their hand to their mouth were 300 men. This is the original, better than the Spartans.

But all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. To do that, you have to take your armor off. They took their armor off.

They came to the water. They wanted to satisfy themselves and drink water. And the Lord said to Gideon, by 300 that lapped, I will save you and deliver the Midianites to your hand and let all the other people go home, everyone to his own place.

So you see, crowds and courage are not enough when it comes to God filtering through and getting his final criteria. Final criteria. God demands another quality.

If he's gonna use me, if he's gonna use you in the days ahead, he demands something. He says, I will test them, bring them down. His eyes are looking at their heart.

And so when they come down and the enemy's in sight and they take their armor off and they lap like, they swish the water all over themselves. So it's just amazing that 9,700 of the 10,000 were more concerned with their personal comfort at the moment than the battle of the Lord. See, they were part of the crowd.

They were courageous. But 9,700 of these made the odds like 14 to one. It's just crazy.

There's no way to win this on any human level. So 1% of the original 32,000. So the 300 could not be distracted.

They would not allow anything around them to take their mind and heart. They were full-time soldiers. It wasn't enough to be willing to die for this.

They had to be willing to live every moment. And that's what we've been talking about. Surrender moment by moment.

No gaps in their concentration. Men of integrity. Consistent soldiers in their heart.

Full-time as a way of life. A single eye. Their convictions control them.

These are men of conviction. And this one thing I do. They've said that forever, yes.

So see, look around you today. And you see these same groups of people. These same groups of people within the church.

Many are willing to lay down their lives. But they're not willing to lay down their lifestyle. It's a difference.

If God's going to really use you, sometime he'll have you do that for his glory and honor. And suffer me first. Like, Lord, let me go bury my dad.

Or suffer me first. Let me first do what I have to do. These are pictures of men of the cross.

You don't hear many messages on the cross in these days. But yet you see the people like Whitefield and Wesley. They were different in many areas of their own theology.

But the one thing that all these great men that changed continents had in common is they cleaved to the cross. They preached the cross. And that is what we must hold to.

Many people will wear a uniform and want to be part of the group, but they'll never go into battle. The courage of the moment is not the same thing as the consistent life that every day is choosing. So many will dare to be a Daniel as long as the lions are asleep.

You can go out and do that. Sometimes death would be easier in the fiery trial, day by day, than staying in a job you hate. For the glory of God.

He said, I want you to glorify and honor me in this job that you literally hate. But I'm using you there. So the odds are 450 to 1 right now.

That is not good. Discouraging to those who only walk by sight. Listen to 1 Samuel 14.6. There's no restraint to God whether to save by the many or by the few.

2 Chronicles 14.11. Lord, it's nothing for you to help, whether with many or just with them that have no power. You can do this. So one man and God himself, like putting Michael on like a coat, that body, that temple of God, him take it.

One man like Michael. And the Lord Jesus Christ is a majority in any crowd. It's a majority in any crowd.

And so here's the point that I want to get across. He that's faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. And he that's unjust in least is also unjust in much.

It's the little things that matter in your life and mine. They are the embellishments of true sanctification. It's one thing to do the things like read your Bible this much every day and do what we think is sanctification.

But God has something different. He has fellowship for us. And so here's the test I want to show you.

And hear this. Here's the point. I mean, I feel like this has been hard going so far to get to this point.

I mean, I have not seen the difficulty in bringing a message like this in a long time. But here's the point I want you to get. Here's the point.

They were tested. This final test. May the Holy Ghost apply this to my heart and your heart.

And here it is. God didn't say to that last group of people, you're being tested. It's the test of the unconscious moment.

Something as ordinary as drinking water. But see, it manifests where your heart really is. So they were not aware that they were being categorized by Almighty God to put them on the front lines of what's one of the most famous conflicts in the Scriptures.

Some of them went home. Some of them protected themselves. But to be in that front line, it's a simple test and it's a secret test.

You can't work it up. Maybe they thought it didn't matter. You're tested in that small thing, you see.

In terms of their usefulness, it was the testing of the heart. And this is what God does. I mean, here's what I want you to get.

We're talking about holiness. We're talking about sanctification. God tests our heart in ordinary things.

Like how you answer the person that offended you. You might be being tested in the unconscious moment. How you do your taxes.

Tested in the unconscious moment. It's got to be in the presence of God. How you look at things on the internet.

Tested in the unconscious moment. And see, a little leaven, the devil knows, can leaven the entire lump. Something as simple as what you drink or eat or how you talk or on the freeway.

But see, here's the point. All of us are on good behavior when we know that God is watching. All of us are careful to pass the test.

God says, okay, Brother Roberts, this is a test. And you say, okay, and we do it. But see, this kind of test we're talking about here that puts you on the front lines in a moment when the glory of God, as you'll see, comes.

It's not the same. I think it's pretty amazing that you see in chapter 7 here, verse 15. It was so when Gideon heard the telling of this dream, he knew that they were going to win this.

And he worshipped. And so he says in verse 16 of chapter 7, he divided the 300 men into three companies and he put a trumpet in every man's hand with empty pitchers and torches or lamps within. Here's what it was.

You get a clay pot and you put a lit torch inside that clay pot and you can't see it at night. It kind of sizzles in there. It is lit, but it's not really flaming.

And then he had them take that. And they had a trumpet in the other hand, empty pitchers over these lamps. And he says to them, look on me and do the same thing.

Can I say that to my brothers? Look at me and do the same thing. Let's do this together. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

And behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it will be that as I do, so shall you do. Every leader has got to be able to say that. Follow me.

Follow me. Not do as I say, not as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets on every side of the camp and say the sword of the Lord and get in.

So get in. Picture this. There's a big plateau with 135,000 men camping in this night.

You'll see it's like 2 o'clock in the morning. And they go up there. And can you see these 300 guys taking their place? Can you see them tiptoeing up to the top? Can you see, oh, you stepped on my foot.

No, you don't do that. You're quiet. You're disciplined.

These are men of conviction. They're sticking to it. Hey, you heard a good joke lately, Charlie? You know, and they don't do that.

They're walking up here. They're getting up there to go. And they come.

They take 100 men on this side of the camp up high on the hill. And there's kind of an amphitheater down there. Another 100 men here.

And another 100 men here. And Gideon says, Now do what I do. Well, so Gideon and the 100 men that were with him came to the outside of the camp.

It's the beginning of the Middle Watch. And they had but newly set the watch. So these guys are still wiping sleep out of their eyes.

They're looking up at the night sky. It's a quiet night. All pagans are superstitious.

You know that? They are. And so the newly set watch. And they blew the trumpets.

And they broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers and held the lamps up in their left hands and the trumpet in their right hand to blow. And they cried, The sword of the Lord.

And Gideon. So here you are on the top of this hill. And you're 100 guys.

And you have this trumpet. And you have this pot. And at the right moment they all break.

And you can hear this. These pitchers breaking. And all of a sudden that night air hits that torch.

And it comes up. And they go, The sword of the Lord. And Gideon.

This must have really messed them up. And they were just looking up and looking. And absolute fear came.

And I'll tell you what. Camels don't like surprises. I was in Israel.

And I slapped a camel on the rear end one time. And he almost took my head off. Here's a camel.

Can you see him? They have two eyelids. And they're sitting there like this. And all of a sudden they see these flashing 300 bright lights like they're descending from heaven on them.

And they stood every minute in place around the camp. And they blew their trumpets. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali and out of all of Manasseh.

And they pursued after the Midianites. Let me tell you. When these camels were afraid, they took off.

And tents don't slow down a camel that's running. You're sitting there. He's kind of trying to sleep.

And all of a sudden you hear this. The sword of the Lord and Gideon. And all of a sudden your tent vanishes from over you.

Because a camel runs through. And you see the whole camp in chaos and sparks from fires. Can you see the chaos that's caused? And God turns them with obedience.

And this is what He wanted. He wanted to have these men that would obey Him. And they turned against each other.

The 300 blew the trumpets. And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the hosts. They start saying, Where's that? Oh, sorry.

It's a roommate. You cut his head off. Because he's trying to get away too.

And so the men of Israel gathered themselves together. And suddenly all the other guys that had been away they take courage. This is often what it's like when God moves in and does a great thing and people around that are watching suddenly take great courage and begin to do something.

And Gideon sent messengers to that old Mount Ephraim saying, Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters to Bethabara and Jordan. And all the Ephraimites gathered themselves together and took the waters to Bethabara and Jordan. Now Bethabara is where Jesus was baptized.

It's where John was baptizing. It's where they crossed in to the promised land. So these are greatly symbolic things for them and it means a lot.

So here we have 300 faithful men and they passed that test in secret. Here's what I want to ask you. In our day, masses come to the initial gospel call.

And they're interested in the kingdom for one of many reasons. Maybe all kinds of stuff. There are mega churches.

We've talked about that these days. Our blessed heavenly Gideon in these days through all these things that have been happening is going through and watching people categorize themselves as to whether they will be able to be used. Our massive mega churches, church groups, and he's filtering out the army of God.

And I know that you in this room are going to be on the front lines. The hosts of darkness and the forces of flesh are marshalling against the Lord's people. You can tell it.

You can hear it. I mean, it's incredible what's happening in the news and with people just doing what's right in their own eyes and coming against anybody that even takes a similar to Christian stand. And they hate the church.

They hate the church. So even if we have blown it, God can recover you. He can recover you and bless you.

Numbers and courage are not enough. God is looking on my heart. He wants to see how I respond.

You know, when someone really hurts you unjustly, accuses you falsely of something, it hurts your heart. And this might not have happened like your family or something else until these very days. There's all kind of new kind of tests coming to individuals and how I respond.

Not when God says, you're being tested right now. And we say, yes, okay, I'll make that choice. No.

He wants it to be a residual holiness that's in us from Him being there. So that when this happens to you, you let Him answer. And it becomes a habit.

It becomes a habit. Just like in Matthew 6. He says, when you give, when you fast, when you pray. And He is talking them to do it in secret.

See, doing fasting in secret teaches you to make that choice on the inside to deny yourself. And that's how sin entered in the body. And so you see these people learning to deny themselves.

That's the answer for the lust of the flesh. And if you start fasting by choice and go against your own heart and desire, you will find it much easier in day-to-day life to say no. And so you have the lust of the eye.

That's the possession. And if you give in secret when nobody knows. You don't tell anybody.

Your insides are strengthened like iron by reason of choice. And it sets a buttress and a wall on the inside. So you don't have to always covet and want everything to come your way.

And if you learn to pray in secret, and it's about the pride of life. All that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It's passion, it's possession, and it's position.

And He has these disciplines of the Holy Spirit for you and for me to where I'm learning how to fast and not tell a soul I'm trusting Him. And so what happens is the next time you're in a situation, it's more supernaturally natural. This is what God wants for His people.

Supernaturally natural. What an awesome term. Supernaturally natural.

It's where Christ in you is the assurance, and you know it. The Lord Jesus is King, and He's Lord. We've got to see this today.

We've got to see this. God is looking on our hearts, each one, and He's looking at my heart. Today's been a tough day for me.

I had some things happen this morning, and I had to go down to the urgent care to take some medicine. And it made me so... It was very humbling for me, because it's not anything contagious, don't worry. But I'm sitting there, up here on this panel today, and they gave me this Cipro.

And I took it, and I felt like somebody had drugged me. I'm up here on this panel, I'm sitting here, something you saw. And I had to just think.

I said, they think I'm not interested. And the Lord says, don't worry about it. Don't worry about it.

But I do worry about it. You know, we're so caught up with what people think. And I'm telling you tonight, I shouldn't be doing that.

I shouldn't just be letting it roll. But men of the Word, and men of prayer, men of the heart, temperance, obedience by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God has disciplined them, and learn to make those inside, invisible choices.

Have you done that? Are you doing that? You want God to use you in the days ahead? Then learn to obey Him when nobody notices. Learn His leadership in the whole realm of fasting. Learn His realm, His leadership in the whole realm of giving.

Learn His leadership in the whole realm of praying, in the closet. When you enter into your closet, shut your door. And your Father who sees in secret will see, and He will reward you openly.

He talks about that, about praying in secret. But how many pray in secret? Maybe the secret of all our failure is the failure of secret prayer. Maybe we don't take that seriously.

We think we can just pray when we need something. But as long as I see prayer as just a need meter, a means to an end, I haven't even begun to see what He meant for it to be. He wants the church to be the

open channel of the will of God, to come through prayer after they've gotten their own hearts right.

If I regard Psalm 66, 18, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. You can ask amiss, and God won't answer what you say. But this is the confidence that I have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, the minister in the real sanctuary, the one who ever lives to pray for me.

He's praying for me. This is the confidence that I have that He has sent His Holy Spirit into my heart, and His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen Lord, is crying out of a father. And He's wanting to have fellowship with Him.

In His prayer, the Lord Jesus is saving from the guttermost to the uttermost as He prays. Why is He praying today? I don't know. But you want to know how He's praying? Read John 17, because He never changes.

He's praying five times there for us to be one. One. And there's so much difference around.

Five times He says, Be one, Father, that the love that you have for me would be in them, and that I would be in them. I want to put Mike on like a coat. I want to go to work today.

I want you to get up in the morning and say, Lord, here's your body. Have a nice day. That's what He wants for us.

And it's so unearthly and so beautiful. He gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. It says in Acts 5.32 where they're explaining the reason for things.

He gives the Holy Spirit. He's not talking about being sealed and being saved and regenerated there. He's talking about the anointing of God on us to serve Him like Gideon did, because you see, He's committed to what the Lord says.

So maybe you would ask the Lord tonight, Lord, am I usable? I'm more amazed every day as I see my own heart at what is yet there to be possessed by the Lord. I thought everything, but the COVID and all the churches and all the difficulties, everything. I'm sure you've seen things in your family and different things, and you're sitting there and saying, Where did that come from? Where did it come from? Well, God, it's the refiner's fire.

It's the purifying fire, bringing up and bubbling up things to where we have the privilege of confessing our sin together and walking in His light as He's in the light. And so we're talking about holiness. I wonder what the next years will be like for you.

Ten years ago, just like that. And you may not last ten years. I mean, we've been talking about how quickly life goes and how it could be.

Nobody ever expects to have an automobile wreck and be taken home right there. And so when I say, make your goodbyes and your hellos with your family more special. Give yourself to little things and let the Holy Ghost teach you inwardly how to walk in Him every moment, to walk by faith.

The question is, am I usable? Or am I being disqualified in some unguarded moment? That's the question for tonight. I mean, I've seen some great preachers who after our meetings were over, I found out later that they were dismissed because this man, 55 years old, was hooked on pornography, the pastor and his study. And they dismissed him because it was a secret thing.

It was on the inside, but he never dealt with that. So the question is, the unguarded moment, have you taken your armor off? Are you just wanting to get a good old drink of water? You see, what do you do when no one is watching? Do you avoid the I am God? I'm just being real with you tonight. This is real stuff, because when we leave here tonight, I'm sure Brother Roberts is going to give you a great send-off word.

What I wanted to do, and it was hard for me with my situation today, was just to say, let's go forward! Let's go forward. Let's quit talking about it, let's quit thinking about it, and let's let the Lord lead us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. You see, Jesus did this filtering while He was on Earth.

He had all these people following Him, and multitudes that followed Him in Luke 14, and they were emotionally attracted, but they were unwilling to pay the price because they heard Him say, drink my blood and eat my flesh, John 6, 6, 6. And it says many of His disciples turned back and would walk with Him no more after that. So He had then followers. He had His own that were there, His disciples, and they left because it was too radical.

Three times, He says to them in Luke 14, He says, whoever does this, and does this, and does this, or doesn't do this, you cannot be My disciple! You can't do it! So, I heard an old man say this down in the Virgin Islands. He says, it's a picture of the Lord Jesus coming to like us, Brother. And we say, fill my cup, Lord, fill my cup! And we're praying, and we're singing, getting all fired up in it.

And the Lord has a golden picture. I know it's not the way it is, but don't think I'm saying this is a golden picture. He's looking at that and filling up the whole floor.

He says, I want somebody might drink and be poisoned. Wash you and make you clean. Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

How much emphasis is all that in the tabernacle, in the temple? Cleaning up. Without holiness, you won't see God. It's not just talking about heaven.

It's talking about to a priest in the temple. If you tried to go in there with spot or blemish, you'd be struck dead. You had to be dressed in white linen.

It's a picture of the blood of Jesus. And you had to have your hands cleaned, repeatedly, and your feet cleaned, over and over and over. So, people bypass the cross, and as long as the cross is discarded, the church's work is discredited.

They look, and they see, and they say, where is the cross? Men who are willing to become men of character. Women who will take His words seriously in every area of their life. So, every one of us, and I'm finishing up now with this.

I've still got a few seconds. Every one of us lives by one of three motives. Every day.

This is what motivates us. I mean, you're one of these kind of people. You may be a mixture, but I think this is true, and see if you think it's true.

It underlies all we do, and it sets direction on our daily life. You're either motivated by convenience, and Americans are like this. We want things to be easier, always easier.

Convenience. And you can say, this group of people is really, at the heart, a man pleaser. Or you're operating by crisis.

This is the one that are courageous. You see, this is the soul. The first one's the body.

Convenience. Dress up, nice house, everything. And that motivates you, and choices you make.

But the second one, crisis, is when you come, and it's your soul. You are a man pleaser, not a self pleaser. Excuse me, convenience is a self pleaser.

The crisis is a man pleaser. It depends upon circumstances. The first one, convenience, depends upon comfort.

But crisis depends upon circumstances. How you doing there, Bill? I'm just trying to keep the peace, just trying to keep my head above water. It's one big crisis after another.

And so, you can see the third one that we saw, this third group, is the people of conviction. Now, let me just say, this is the spirit man. This is the spirit man.

The person that's a self pleaser, here's how they pray. Lord, give me this. Lord, give me this.

Lord, give me that. And they're occupied with their own comforts and preoccupied and charmed by the world. And the people of crisis, here's how they pray.

Lord, help me. Lord, help me. Help me, Lord.

And fear is a major factor in that life that's a man pleaser. I'm just trying to survive. Don't rock the boat.

But the last one, the conviction, here's what they pray. Lord, have me. Take my life and let it be.

Consecrate it, Lord, to Thee. And that great hymn, what an awesome thing. Can I say this truly, in the secret part, tonight.

Tonight, a God pleaser, willing to be laughed at, willing to be mocked, willing to be arrested for truth, like John the Baptist went to jail for taking a firm stand against Herod. He lost his head, as Keith Green said, for the gospel, you see. Willing to be suffering for righteousness sake.

The church in America is far from this. And it's a great liability to us. For as much as Christ has suffered in the flesh for us, arm yourself with that same mind.

Arm means an offensive weapon. Ready to suffer. Ready to move into it.

You learn how to fast. You learn how to put down your flesh, bossing you around. You learn how to give.

You're giving up what you spent your life trying to get more, get more. You're giving now, secretly. Inside it's making iron in the soul.

And you learn how to pray in the presence of God. And you, the pride of life can't exist in a person that spends lots of time alone with God. The pride of life will wilt.

It'll wilt. So, a life of conviction is not a life of self-effort, but self-ceasing. That's what we've got to realize.

Listen to this scripture as I finish. Matthew 16. Because, see, it talks about these three types of people right there.

You've got the people of convenience. You've got the people of crisis. You've got the people of conviction.

And in Matthew 16, when the Lord Jesus says this to His disciples, listen to what He says. So familiar to you, this verse. But maybe you can see how it refers to more things here now.

Matthew 16, verse 23. It's when, right after Jesus turned to Peter and said, You're an offense to me, because you savor not the things that be of God, but those things that be of men. And then said Jesus to His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

That's the answer for convenience and being a self-pleaser. And take up His cross. That's the answer for a man who lives by crisis.

If you face the crisis of the cross, you will not fear anything else if you've really faced it. And let him follow me. That's conviction.

That's the conviction. That's the God-pleaser where you're trying to honor Him in all that you do. And you do it in secret in everything you do.

So like I said, everybody's on good behavior when they know this is a test. And you're going to do your very best. But see, here's what gets me.

Here's what gets me. God tests us when we don't know we're being tested. And this is the great area that we need to give attention to.

How can you pass a test like that when you don't really know when the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good? How can anyone do that? How can a test like that be passed? Only one way. Become a full-time lover in every area, every part of your life. Of Jesus.

And you won't have to worry about passing specific tests. Abandonment. Abide in Him.

Faithfully follow. Let Him deny Himself. The answer for convenience.

Let Him take up His cross. The answer for crisis. And let Him pray.

That's the answer for conviction. Let Him follow me. Let Him follow me.

That's the life that He wants us to have. Now, I just will remind you of one more thing. Moses, remember, what a man of God.

What a man of God. But do you remember now how that he got fed up with the people? And he says, How do I have to bring the water out of the rock? And he hit the rock. Boom! And the Lord said, That's it, Moses.

You're finished. Remember that? Moses, you can't go in the Promised Land because, I mean, it's a picture too. The law can't lead you in.

Yeshua has to lead you in. But Moses here is left behind because of an unguarded moment where he smote that rock when the Lord said, Speak to it! And he had been leading them for so long that he really, I

mean, I'm not thinking Moses is anything but awesome to me. I can't even believe how awesome he is.

But what about Elijah? When the Lord says to him, He says, Listen, after this, when he gets down and he realizes he's alone and he says, Nobody's like me! And the Lord says, There's 7,000 left beside you. He begins to look at himself in such a way in that unguarded moment. And the Lord comes to Elijah and He says, Go anoint Haziel, king of Syria.

Go anoint Jehu, king of Israel. And go anoint Elijah in your place. You're finished.

I just, you know, I know that if God does it, it's good. But it's a shame to see a ministry of life shortened because we have done wrong. What about Saul? Lord, I've kept these flocks to offer to you.

These flocks here. Partial obedience. The Lord said, That's it.

Your kingdom has been snatched from you. You're finished. I've got somebody better than you.

That's almost as bad and hard to hear as hearing, Depart from me. I never knew you. I don't think it is that bad.

But I'm saying, A person that served faithfully God for so many years and a person that goes out and has a stupid time with a secretary. The Lord can come and say, That's it for you. You're not out of the kingdom.

But I'm sending you home to the trenches back to your tent. And you're going to have to be like Manasseh who tried to rebuild after all his terrible things and it was too late for him. He died a miserable man.

So is it not time to rise up and follow fully? So his eyes are looking. Listen to this poem. I love this poem.

I love this poem. Listen to this poem. It's about the warfare of God.

It says, The son of God goes forth to war. A kingly crown to gain. His blood-stained banner streams afar.

Who follows in his train? Am I a soldier of the cross? A follower of the Lamb? Or shall I fear to own his cause or blush to speak his name? Is that going to be what it's like for me? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought to win that prize and sailed over bloody seas? Will you play then? Will you dally far behind the battle lines? Up it is Jehovah's rally. God's own arm has need of thine. I'm not saying we do what only God can do.

I'm not saying that we can initiate and ask God to do it for us. I'm saying this. God has chosen to use his sovereign will through our hearts and lives if we are usable.

Be ye holy. Become holy, it says, because I am holy. This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

Sanctify them through your truth, O Father. For this reason thy word is the truth, and for this reason I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Jesus sanctifying himself by the word of God.

He's already holy. But it became the passion to live by every word. It's incredible to me.

I don't understand it, but he left us. I've given you an example that you should follow. After he washed their feet, I've given you an example that as I've done to you, you should do for each other.

I told one pastor, I said, you don't need to have a committee meeting. You need to have a foot washing for your deacons. Y'all are squabbling.

You need to have a foot washing and get together and let God melt your heart. Well, let's pray. Father, in Jesus' name, I pray that you will bring what you want from this time today.

The test of the unconscious moment may well be how they respond tonight to this word. The test of the unconscious moment when we don't even realize how much is at stake. Big, big things depend on small choices so many times.

And we can choose this day whom we serve and so much becomes through it. And we can give ourselves to your things and you will bring forth what you will be done on earth. So I pray for each person in this room that you will allow them the privilege of getting your radiant eyes through their heart and mind and show them how their words as a preacher.

Woe is me, I'm undone. I'm a man of unclean lips and I live in a country that's surrounded by people of unclean lips. A preacher and a hot coal from the altar that stood for Calvary was taken and touched his lips.

That'll change the way you talk. May the gracious heartbeat and the words of our Lord Jesus come forth. Yes, give me the power to say things strongly and prophetically and bluntly to your church in this hour but may they sense the love of God for them that they will become a people of God's own choosing.

Teach us how to present the church before you. To watch for the church. Oh brethren, obey those over you in the Lord because they watch for you in the Lord.

Make it so they can present you with boldness and happiness, not sadness because you just weren't listening. Teach us about those unconscious moments, I say it again, when we don't even know we're being tested. How do we pass that? By being a full time man of God, woman of God, holy vessel with every thought, every word, every deed.

When you said seek your face, everything said yes, yes. And it's not just because I should, it's because I love you and it's because your spirit is leading me and I'm partaking of your nature by these exceeding great and precious promises. What a deep blessing.

Find this word to our hearts. Lord, I pray they'll trouble us sometime, maybe at night, when the Lord brings something to mind and says this has been your unconscious moment. Repent! If you love me, repent! As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Repent! Remember from what it used to be like and repeat the first works and repent. Repent! You've left your first love. You never lost it.

Everybody says we lost it. And if you want it back, go right back to where you left it. God will come and he won't scold you.

If you lack wisdom, ask him and he will give you wisdom and he won't scold you, it will be given liberally to you. Because he is in this saving to the uttermost business and he's in the business of finishing that good work that he began. Oh, amazing grace.

Thank you for it. We pray in Jesus' name.

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