

(Through the Bible) Judges 1-7

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the cyclical pattern of Israel's disobedience and God's faithfulness in the Book of Judges, emphasizing the need for complete obedience and the importance of passing faith to the next generation.

Duration: 1:37:32

Scripture: Judges 2:1-3, Judges 2:16, Judges 2:18-19, Judges 6:16, Matthew 6:33, John 21:5-6

Topics: "God's Deliverance", "Spiritual Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the book of Judges in the Bible. He highlights the recurring pattern of the Israelites turning away from God and falling into oppression, only to be delivered by God through the raising up of judges. The preacher emphasizes the cycle of disobedience and oppression that the Israelites repeatedly go through. He also mentions the story of Deborah, a judge who wrote a song to remind the people of God's delivering power. The sermon concludes with the message that success comes from relying on God's presence and working together with Him.

Transcript

The Book of Judges. Through Moses, the children of Israel were led out of Egypt, and God began to form a national kind of a identity, and began to forge the beginnings of a nation. At the death of Moses, Joshua, who was the servant of Moses, took over, and continued to lead the people now into the land that God had promised to their father Abraham that should be theirs, that they should inhabit, and thus God keeping His covenant and His word to Abraham.

Now, the Book of Judges takes up the next period in their history. There were some 13 judges over Israel. Now, they became sort of quasi-leaders of Israel.

They would judge in the matters of the people. They were leaders, but never fully empowered by the people as rulers. They were in an interim period between Joshua and the establishing of a monarchy, at which time Saul became the first king over Israel.

So, this Book of Judges covers this period of time between the death of Joshua and the coming in of Samuel, who was the final judge over Israel, and who anointed Saul to be the first king over Israel, where their form of government was changed from a theocracy, God ruling over the people, to a monarchy. Now, the theocracy was not successful simply because the people would not submit to the rule of God. In the Book of Judges, we find a pattern that emerges, a very tragic pattern.

And that is during the time when they were blessed, at ease, without war, they would turn to other gods and begin to worship Baal and Ashtoreth, the various gods of the Canaanites, the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Hittites and the Jebusites, the people in the land in which they were dwelling. And because of their apostasy, God would give them over into the hand of their enemies, and they would be oppressed by their enemies. And being oppressed by their enemies, they would cry out unto the Lord, and the Lord would raise up a judge to be a deliverer.

And they would be delivered from the oppression of their enemies, and they would have a period of prosperity. The judge would die and back into the same old pattern of turning their backs on God and beginning again to worship Baal and the other gods in the groves and all. It's just a sad, tragic story of failure.

The failure of consistency in the worship of God and in the honoring of God. So, as we enter into the book of Judges, we enter the scene at the death of Joshua there in verse 1. Now, after the death of Joshua, it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the Lord saying, who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first to fight against them? Now, you remember the book of Joshua closed where the people were in the land, but there was yet much of the land that was not yet conquered. They had not completely driven out the enemies.

They had not yet taken all of the territories that God had promised unto them. So, when Joshua died, they inquired and they said, who shall go up first to take the land that God has given? And so, the Lord spoke and said, Judah shall go first. Now, you remember that Judah was given that land south of Jerusalem.

And so, Judah said to Simeon, whose lot was the extreme south, even south of Judah down towards Beersheba and all, said to Simeon, you go up and help us take our portion, and then we'll help you to take your portion. And so, Judah began to attack the cities and take the cities and possess the cities that God had apportioned unto Judah. And they came to Bezek, and there they killed 10,000 men of Bezek and took the city.

And Adonai Bezek, now Adonai means Lord. So, he was the Lord of Bezek or the King of Bezek. They captured him and they cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

And Adonai Bezek said, there have been 60 or 70 kings that have gathered their meat under my table without their thumbs and toes. As I have done, so hath God requited me. So, it was a practice, I guess, of this particular king, the Lord of Bezek, to, when he would conquer a king to cut off his great toes and his thumbs, and he would actually be there at the king's table, 70 kings he had conquered this way.

And he said, as I have done, now God has requited unto me. There's a very interesting scripture. It declares, as a man soweth, so shall he also reap.

And so many times a person can say, as I have done, so has God requited unto me. For in the same manner in which ye judge, ye shall be judged. In whatever measure you meet, it shall be meted out to you.

As I have done, so has God requited me. And they fought against Jerusalem and they had taken it. They'd smitten it with the edge of the sword.

Then they went down to fight against the Canaanites that dwelt in the mountain and in the south and in the valley. And they went against the Canaanites in Hebron. And there Caleb said, the one who takes Kirjath Zephyr, I will give him Aksa, my daughter, as a wife.

And so Othniel, who was the nephew of Caleb or the cousin of Aksa, went up and took the city. And so Caleb gave her to him for a wife. And so she then came to her dad and asked for springs.

And the story is told there in chapter one of how he gave her the upper and the lower springs for that area. Then we have the tragic story in verse 21. The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem.

But the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. The house of Joseph went up against Bethel. The Lord was with them.

They found a man and they said, tell us where the secret entrance to Bethel is and we will spare you. So the man showed them the entrance to the city of Bethel. They went in and destroyed it, but they saved the man and his house alive who went out and established another city, named it after the original name of Bethel, which is Luz.

But then Manasseh, in verse 27, did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Sheen and her towns. Nor Tanak and her towns. Nor the other cities, including here is Megiddo.

Any of you that have been in Israel have seen the ruins of Megiddo. And it came to pass when Israel was strong that they put the Canaanites to tribute and did not utterly drive them out. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites.

Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kidron and several cities. Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Akko or of Sidon. And so the story is that of an incomplete victory.

Now, God had told them, when you come into the land, you're to utterly drive out the inhabitants thereof. You're not to make any covenant of peace with them. You're not to dwell together and try to coexist with them in peaceful terms.

Utterly drive them out was the command of God. But here is a failure on their part to obey the voice of God. Now, there was no doubt a rationale in their minds.

They no doubt thought, well, if we allow these people to stay here, actually they want to be on friendly terms. They'll be strengthened by us. We can be strengthened by them being here.

And we ought to be able to live peaceably with them. Coexist together. And they can be our servants.

They can cut our wood for us and gather, you know, our crops. And they can build our buildings and we'll just use them. Whatever the rationale is, it is wrong if it is opposed to what God has ordered.

Now, many times in our own minds, what God has required or what God has commanded of us doesn't seem to be for our best interest. It so often seems that we can figure out a better plan than God did. And we are often guilty, as were the children of Israel, of not completely obeying the command of the Lord because we don't understand why God commanded it.

It doesn't make sense to us. But God has a reason for everything that He commands. And whether it makes sense to me or not, it is important that I obey the commandment of God.

Because you'll always find out that God always knew what He was talking about. And there was a reason behind the command. Now, the command to utterly exterminate the people seems to be harsh.

It seems to be cruel. To utterly drive them out from their land, that seems to be a very cruel command. And it may be that the people just felt, well, that's too harsh.

That's too cruel. We don't want to do that. And thus, in disobeying God, it brought ultimate problems to their children, to their descendants.

It became a perennial problem afterwards because they failed to completely obey the voice of the Lord. So, in chapter 2, we read, And the angel of the Lord came from Gilgal to Bochim and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt and brought you into the land, which I swear to your fathers. And I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of the land. Ye shall throw down their altars, but you have not obeyed my voice. Why have you done this? Wherefore, I also said, I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their God shall be a snare unto you.

And it shall come to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words to all the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept, and they called the name of the place Bochim, which means weepers, and they sacrificed unto the Lord. So, the angel of the Lord came and said, you failed. God said he would never break his covenant with you, but they broke the covenant.

God is always faithful to his side of the covenant. It is man who breaks the covenant with God, not God who breaks the covenant with man. No man can ever say, God broke his covenant with me.

Not so. Man is guilty of breaking his covenant with God, his part of the covenant with God, but God doesn't break his covenant with man. And so, the angel said, you've broken the covenant, you've made the league, you've made the treaties, you've left their places of worship, their altars, their idols, and now they're going to be like traps, snares to you.

And the people wept. They sacrificed unto God, but they didn't change. Now, that is so typical of so many people today.

God lays a heavy trip on them. Oh, I'm so sorry, God, I'm so sorry. And they weep, but they don't change.

So, there's very little value to the repentance. There seems to be a vast difference between sorrow and true repentance. Many people out of sorrow weep, truly weep, because of sorrow.

But it doesn't really indicate always that there is repentance, just because you're weeping. I don't suppose there is a single man in the county jail that isn't sorry for the crime that got him there. But not necessarily sorry that he did it, but sorry for the mistake that got him caught.

So, you weep over your apprehension. You weep over the fact that I've been apprehended, but you don't really have a true repentance for the things that you were doing. They're released, they go back out and do the things again.

So often, it means there is no repentance. The children of Israel, they wept. Looking at it, they say, oh my, isn't that wonderful, they're weeping.

God's got to them. No, He didn't. It's just a surface emotional experience.

They're going to wail and weep for a while and go right back out and do the same thing over again. They're still not going to drive out the enemy. They're still not going to obey the voice of God.

They're going to continue in their same path. And so, there is a form of religion, a form of godliness, but no true repentance. And that same condition continues to exist to the present day.

Now, these people that they left in the land did become a snare. The gods that they did not destroy became as thorns. And soon, we find them worshiping these gods that they left in the land.

And it was the constant problem through their history is their worship of the gods of the land and the leaving of the true and the living God and worshiping these other gods. So that Jeremiah cried out unto the people, have you ever seen anything like this in the history of mankind? Where a people will turn from their God, even which are not gods, to worship another God. And yet, God cried, my people have forsaken me the fountain of living water and have hewn out for themselves cisterns, cisterns that can hold no water.

The lament of God over Israel. And it was their failure in the beginning. Had these forefathers been obedient to God, they could have spared the nation countless misery, countless woes.

But their disobedience only opened the door for a future of calamity. And so the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all of the great works of the Lord, which he did in Israel. But Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at 110 years of age, and they buried him there in the Mount of Ephraim on the north side of the hill of Gash.

And there arose another generation after them, that is after Joshua's generation, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Balaam. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt.

And they followed other gods of the gods of the people that were around about them. And they bowed themselves unto them and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtoreth, the goddess of heaven or the Ashtoreth of the Greeks or Isis, the female deity of ancient history.

Now, it is tragic that somehow the parents failed to communicate unto their children the power and the work of God. The generation died off. There arose another generation, it declares, after them which did not know Jehovah, nor yet the works that he had done for their fathers in Egypt.

Now, the purpose of the Passover was to yearly open the door of opportunity for them to relate to the children of Israel God's great deliverance out of the hand of the Egyptians. In fact, there were questions designed in the Passover service that the children would ask that would give the parents the opportunity to rehearse God's great power. What makes this night different from all other nights in the year? And they were able to rehearse to their children, but evidently they had ceased even observing the Passover.

They had ceased keeping the various feasts to the Lord. And where the Lord said, tell your children that they may tell their children that they may tell their children, it broke down and the parents were not faithful in imparting the truths of God to their children. It is so tragic that rarely does a powerful work of God continue into a second generation.

Someone has aptly said, God has no grandchildren. You can't have that kind of a distant relationship with God. Each one must have his own personal relationship with God.

And the relationship that my parents had is not sufficient for me. And the relationship that I have isn't sufficient for my children. It is important that I relate to my children the power of God and the works of God in order that they might develop their own relationship with God.

So that after I am gone, they will understand and know God and continue in their relationship with God. And they to their children growing up in the depression years was not easy. We were deprived a lot of things.

And it is interesting how that we don't want our children to have to learn the same deprivations that we had. But the tragic thing is our children growing in this affluent society never know the joy and the blessing of having to trust God for the evening meal. Having to pray for a pair of shoes.

Having to believe God for the rent. Because we don't want them to have to experience those same hardships that we experienced. And yet there was tremendous value in those experiences because it was there that we learned the faithfulness of God.

And we learned that God would provide. As parents we are responsible to lay a foundation with our children so that they have a thorough understanding of God, the works of God, the power of God. For there are powerful forces that are vying for their attention, for their love, for their worship.

And if we do not lay a solid foundation within their hearts they are apt as the children of Israel did to turn away from God and begin to worship Balaam, Ashtoreth, and some of the other gods of the world. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtoreth. What a tragedy.

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. He delivered them into the hands of the spoilers that spoiled them. He sold them to the hand of their enemies around about them so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

And wherever they went out the hand of the Lord was against them for evil as he had said. And as the Lord had sworn unto them and they were greatly distressed. God said, even as my hand will be upon you for good if you turn against me and worship other gods so while my hand be upon you for evil.

God kept his word. Now I'm glad that God keeps his word sometimes. Other times it isn't so good for me that God keeps his word.

It is always good for me that he does because it brings me back to him. But the faithfulness of God to keep his word is something that we want to remember because even as God has promised blessings, he has also promised curses. Blessings upon those that will obey.

Curses upon them who will forsake him. And so verse 16 establishes this era of judges. Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges which delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them.

And yet they would not always hearken to the judges, but they went a whoring after other gods and bowed themselves to them and turned quickly out of the way of which their fathers walked in obeying the commandments of the Lord, but they did not so. So when the Lord raised them up judges, the Lord was with the judge and he delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For it

repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of the oppressors that vexed them.

And it came to pass when the judge was dead, they returned and corrupted themselves more than their forefathers in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them. They ceased not from their own doings nor from their stubborn ways. Now this is just a brief sort of a summary of the book of judges.

God raised up judges during the period of the judges. They would be delivered from the oppression of the enemy, but then they would turn away from God and go right back to their evil ways, the worshiping of the false gods and all. And they would go into oppression again and God would raise up another judge.

And the story is repeated over and over and over through the book of judges. When will people learn? You know, you look at this sad situation and you wonder, what's wrong with you people? Why can't you see it? And yet it is a tragic pattern that they followed over and over again. So the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.

He said, because the people have transgressed my covenant, which I commanded their fathers, they have not hearkened to my voice. I will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died. That through them I may prove Israel whether they will keep the way of the Lord or not.

Therefore, the Lord left those nations without driving them out. Now, these are the nations which the Lord left to prove Israel. There were the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Perizzites, and the Amorites that God left.

Six nations. And verse six, the children of Israel took their daughters, that is, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. They took their daughters to be their wives, and they gave their daughters to their sons, and they served their gods.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they forgot Jehovah their God, and they served Balaam in the groves. Now, the groves were the places of worship, and usually extremely licentious type of worship. Therefore, the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.

He sold them into the hand of Kushan Rishathim, the king of Mesopotamia, and they served him for eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel who delivered them, even Othniel, the son of Canaaz, Caleb's younger brother. So, Othniel was the fellow who married Caleb's daughter.

Remember, he took the city, Kirjeth, there near Hebron. And so, Othniel became the first judge over Israel. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, went out to war, and the Lord delivered this Mesopotamian king into his hand, and his hand prevailed against him, and the land had rest for forty years.

Now, forty years is probably sort of a rounded off kind of a figure. It is used over and over again. It would appear that, well, actually though, forty years, you got a generation.

As long as the guy was alive, that generation. When he died, you get a new generation and back to the old apostasy again. It just didn't carry over into the second generation.

And so, here you have the forty years appearing over and over again, which is just about that time of a generation and the failure to go on into the next generation. So, during the years of Othniel, they had rest. And the children of Israel, verse 12, did evil again in the sight of the Lord.

You know, you'd like to take them and just bump their heads together or something. It just is so upsetting. And the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and they went and smote Israel and possessed the city of the palm trees. So, the children of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, for eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gerah, a Benjamite, a man who was left-handed, and by him the children of Israel sent a present to Eglon, the king of Moab.

But Ehud made himself a dagger, sharpened both sides, made it about eighteen inches long, put it under his robe on his left side. And he went in to the king of Moab, old Eger, let's see now, we got Ehud and Eglon. Eglon's the king.

So, he came in to Eglon with a present. And then he said, I have a secret message for you. And so, Eglon, the king of Moab, sent out all the servants.

And he said, I have a message from the Lord for you. And he drew out the dagger. And oh, Eglon was a really fat guy.

He put the dagger in and the fat closed around and he couldn't pull it out. So, he left it in, halved and all. And when he went out of the room, he closed the door and locked it.

And he told the servants, the king is taking a nap. And so, he took off running so that they waited outside and waited outside until they got embarrassed they were waiting there so long. He said, well, we better go in and check on the king.

So, they got the key, unlocked the door. When they got in, they found the king was dead. And it had given Hood time to escape.

And so, he called together an army. And they came against the Moabites. And God delivered them out of the hand of Moab.

They killed that time about 10,000 men of Moab who tried to escape out of Israel back into the land. And the land had rest for 80 years. So, here's twice 40.

And after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath. He was the third judge. And we really don't know much about Shamgar, except he must have been a tough cookie because he killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad.

Now, just the stick that they used when they were plowing with an ox, they'd have a goad, a stick that they'd kick in the flanks with to keep them going. And evidently, he was maybe farming and plowing with his oxen. And here came a company of Philistines over the hill.

So, he goes after them with his ox goad. 600 men with an ox goad. So, he was the third judge of Israel.

That's about all we know of Shamgar. I'd like to know more about that character. Chapter 4, verse 1, the same old story.

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Seserah, which dwelt in Herosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, for He had 900 chariots of iron, and for 20 years He mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

So, this is up now. Hazor is up about 15 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, in the area above Galilee, actually. And Jabin, the king, dwelt there.

Hazor was a fortified city, a very large city. The ruins are quite large, encompass a very large area. But he had a powerful army, 900 chariots of iron, the Canaanite army.

And he oppressed the children of Israel for 20 years. Now, no doubt those that were in the upper area, the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun, were most oppressed by him in that upper area of Galilee. Naphtali was all around Galilee, and Zebulun was just south of Galilee, in the area that is now sort of bordered by Mount Gilboa and Nazareth and Megiddo, the plains through there was the territory of Zebulun.

So, Barak, there was, well, we first of all introduced to Deborah, verse 6. And Deborah was a prophetess, and she judged Israel at that time. So, here is a woman who is judging Israel at this particular time, who also was a prophetess. There are some men today that would exclude women from any kind of service unto God, but certainly God does not exclude them at all, even from important positions such as judging over Israel, and she was gifted as a prophetess.

And she dwelt between Ramah and Bethel, which is just north of Jerusalem, five miles or so. And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinom, of Kadish-Naphtali, so of the area of Naphtali, the area around Galilee. She said unto him, Hath not Jehovah God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river of Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude, and I will deliver him into your hand.

Barak said unto her, If you will go with me, then I will go, but if you won't go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee, notwithstanding the journey that you take shall not be for your honor, for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. So no wonder God had a woman as a judge.

And you have those kind of men in the land that won't do anything unless a woman goes with them. You really don't have real men. And so it was a tragic condition that the land was in when Barak says, Well, I won't go if you don't go with me.

And so she said, Okay, I'll go. But God's going to give the glory to this whole thing, not to you, but to a woman. It'll come to a woman.

God will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. So Barak called Zebulun, the tribe people of Zebulun and Naphtali to Kadesh, the city that he lived in. And he went up with 10,000 men at his feet.

And Deborah went up with him. Now Heber, the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab, who was the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites and had pitched his tent in the plain of

Zanam, which is by Kadesh. Now, Moses' father-in-law, his family sort of came with the children of Israel.

But here, this guy's sort of a traitor. He was a Nark, actually informed on the fact that Sisera was there in Mount Tabor with this army. He let them know.

And so Sisera came down with his army, the 900 chariots and the whole thing. And so Sisera gathered together against them at the river Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up, for this day, this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand.

Is not the Lord gone out from before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor and 10,000 men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera and all of his chariots and all of the hosts with the edge of the sword before Barak, so that Sisera got off of his chariot and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host unto Herosheth of the Gentiles, and all the hosts of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword, and there was not a man left.

Albeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber of the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. Now the house of Heber was the family of Moses' father-in-law. So Jael went out because there was peace between Jabin the Canaanite king and the house of Heber.

Jael went out to the tent door and Sisera came running up. And so Jael said, well, come on into the tent and I will take care of you. And so she covered him with a mantle and he said, give me a drink of water.

So she opened the bottle and gave him some milk. And I thought, that's an interesting Scripture. Think of how long ago they have bottles of milk.

I was really fascinated by that. Now she gave him a drink and covered him. She gave him a drink of milk and covered him.

And of course, good warm milk is sort of a neat thing to drink and go to sleep by. And so he said unto her, now stand in the door and if any man comes by and says, have you seen anybody, tell him no. So Jael Heber's wife took a tent stake and a hammer.

And she came up quietly and she drove the stake through his temples. And she was a tough cookie too, because she also then cut off his head. So that when Barak came up pursuing Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said, come and I'll show you the man you're pursuing.

And so he came into the tent and there was Sisera with a nail driven through his temple. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan. And the children of Israel and the hand of the children of Israel prospered and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan until they destroyed Jabin.

The king of Canaan. And then sang Deborah and Barak the song of Abinomah on that day saying, or Barak the son of Abinomah. So this is the song of Deborah and Barak.

Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord. For the avenging of Israel when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear O kings, give ear O princes, I even I will sing unto the Lord, I'll sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

Lord when you went out of Seir, when you marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens dropped the clouds, also dropped water, the mountains melted from before the Lord and Mount Sinai, the Lord God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar, now here's the next mention of Shamgar. And it

jumps all the way from Mount Sinai to Shamgar.

It's interesting that not more is written of him in the text. The son of Anath in the days of jail, the highways were unoccupied and the travelers walked by the byways. Now it is speaking really of the fear in which the people lived in these days.

They were oppressed by their enemies so bad that they wouldn't take the main roads when they wanted to go someplace. They'd always go by the back roads. Because their enemies were possessing the land.

They would take the main roads that they'd be ripped off by their enemies. So in getting from one place to another, so much fear that they would always go by way of the back roads to get to from one place to another. The inhabitants of the villages ceased.

They ceased in Israel until that I, Deborah, arose. I arose a mother in Israel. And they chose new gods.

Then was war in the gates. And there was a shield or a spear seen among 40,000 in Israel. Actually there was, was there a shield or a spear? Actually they were just disarmed.

They had nothing. My heart is toward the governors of Israel that offer themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord.

They that are delivered from the noise of the archers, they that are delivered from the noise of the archers in the places of drawing water. Actually they were so oppressed by their enemies that their enemies would go to the springs and to the places where there were water and they would just sit in the bushes with their bows and arrows. People come, they'd just take target practice at the people.

I mean they really were living a very tough life. They had forsaken God, God had forsaken them. And there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord.

Even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of the villages in Israel. Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates. Awake, awake, Deborah.

Awake, awake, utter a song. Rise, Barak, and lead the captivity captive, thou son of Abanon. And he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles and so forth.

And so it's the song of victory and how God delivered and the question why didn't other of the tribes come to help. But Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto death in the high places of the field. The kings came and fought.

Then fought the kings of Canaan and Tanak by the waters of Megiddo. They took no gain of money. They fought from heaven.

The stars in their courses fought against Seserah. The river of Kishon swept them away. That ancient river, the river Kishon.

O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. Then were their horses broken by the means of the prancings and the prancings of the mighty one. So, God fought with them.

A rain, a flood that took away their chariots and destroyed them there in the valley of Megiddo. They got bogged. Their chariots became bogged in the mud.

And then the curse of Meroes. Curse ye Meroes, said the angel of the Lord. Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

The curse of Meroes was the curse of not doing anything. Trying to take a neutral position. Standing back and not offering to help in the work of God.

It is tragic that many people today are guilty of the same thing. Non-involvement. Standing back.

God is wanting to do a work in this world today. God has chosen to use people to do His work. And when a call comes out from God, it is our responsibility to respond to that call of God.

And if we don't respond to the call of God to help the Lord to do His work, you say, well, God doesn't need my help. That is so true. But He's chosen to use your help.

And if God chooses to use your help, then you better help. And if you do not help when God has chosen you to use your help, then you rest under the curse. God will do His thing.

God will do His work. Even as Mordecai assured Esther, if you fail, then their deliverance will arise from another quarter, but you're going to be cut off. You're going to be slain.

You're going to lose out. God will deliver His people. That's got to be.

God is going to do His work. But God uses men to do His work. God calls men to do His work.

If you fail to respond to the call of God, if you fail to help God to do His work, God will do His work. But you, as Meroes, will be cursed. Cursed ye bitterly, for they came not to the help of the Lord in the battle against the mighty.

And so, then she pronounces the blessing upon Jael, the wife of Heber. She shall be above all the women in the tent. He asked for water.

She gave him milk. She brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail and her right hand to the workman's hammer.

And with the hammer she smote Caesarea. She smote off his head when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed.

He fell. He laid down. At her feet he bowed.

He fell. Where he bowed, there he fell down dead. The mother of Caesarea looked out the window and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? And her wise ladies answered her, Oh, she returned answering to herself, Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey to every man? A damsel or two to Caesarea, a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needlework, divers colors of needlework on both sides that are fit for the necks of them that shall take the spoil.

So all thine enemies shall perish, O Lord, but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might and the land had rest for forty years. So Deborah, an interesting person, quite a song that she wrote. The purpose of these songs was to put the people into remembrance again of God's delivering

power.

They'd often write the victories of God in songs and then they would sing these songs. And in the singing of the songs, you'll remember a song many times long after you've forgotten incidents. The song is still there in your mind and you're singing and many times you sing just because you like the tune.

You're not even paying any attention to the words, but then suddenly the words begin to sink in. And so that was the purpose of putting the works of God to song in those days. And it was often done.

So again, the rest for forty days. But then in chapter 6, and 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 Midian prevailed against Israel because of the Midianites, the children of Israel, made themselves dens which are in the mountains and caves and strongholds. And so it was when Israel had sown that the Midianites came up and the Amalekites and the children of the east, even they came up against them and they encamped against them and destroyed the increase of the earth till they were come to Gaza. They left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor ass.

And they came up with their cattle and their tents. And as multitude, they were like grasshoppers, for both they and their camels were without number. They entered into the land to destroy it.

And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel which said to them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt.

I brought you forth out of the house of bondage. I deliver you out of the hand of the Egyptians, out of the hand of all that oppressed you. I drove them out from before you.

I gave you their land. I said unto you, I am Jehovah your God, for you are not the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But ye have not obeyed my voice.

So, the situation of this particular apostasy, turning their hearts away from God. God brought now the Midianites against them. Tremendous number of people along with the Amalekites.

And Geza is about the southernmost point along the Mediterranean. So, by the time they got to Geza, they had gone through the entire land. Coming from the east, clear on over to the coast, south to Geza.

Whenever the people would plant their crops, at harvest time, here would come all these people in and just rip them off. They would, you know, you got all your wheat harvested, then they'd just come in and just rip them off from all their wheat and barley and all of their harvest. And then next year, back again, harvest time.

And so, they took away all the sustenance of these people. And a tremendous multitude of them. The people finally cried unto the Lord and the Lord answered with a prophet who told them the reason for their dilemma was the fact that they had forsaken God who had given them deliverance out of Egypt and had brought them into the land.

So, there came an angel of the Lord and sat under an oak tree, which is at Ophrah, that pertained to Joash, the Abrazerite, and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

So, here was Gideon hiding from the Midianites as he was threshing the wheat. Because if the Midianites would catch him, they'd take the wheat.

And so, he was up by the winepress threshing wheat, and here was an angel sitting under an oak tree. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said unto him, The Lord is with you, you very brave man. Gideon said unto him, Oh, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all of this calamity befallen us? Where are all of the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? Now the Lord has forsaken us, delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have I not sent thee? And he said, Oh, my Lord, how shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. Now, as I was mentioning this morning, God oftentimes has trouble getting people to respond to His call. God calls us.

That's the beginning of it. As soon as I respond to the call of God, then God lays out what He wants me to do. And then I resign.

Lord, I can't do that. How in the world can I do that, Lord? God called Moses and said, Go in and stand before Pharaoh. Tell him, let my people go.

Lord, how can I go before Pharaoh? I'm not eloquent in speech. The Lord said to Jeremiah, I have called thee to stand before kings. Lord, how can I stand before kings? I'm young.

No one's going to listen to me. God said to Gideon, Go in this thy might and deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. Lord, how can I deliver? My family is nothing.

I'm the least in my father's household. You got the wrong man. Better check your address papers.

Not me. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee. There's the key of any successful service for God.

I will be with thee. Now, it's an interesting thing that many times we endeavor to do a work for God not directed by God. And this is why we so often get just overwhelmed when God tells us what He wants us to do because we've already tried to do so many things on our own hook and utterly failed.

So, the Lord comes along and tells us to do just the thing we've been trying to do and fail. We say, Lord, I can't do that. I've tried to do that.

God gave to Gideon the key of success. I will be with thee. That's the key of success.

The Lord working with us. Learning to work together with the Lord. The disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing.

And in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. And He said, children, do you have any meat? And they said, no. And He said, cast your nets on the other side.

And when they did, immediately, the nets were full of fish. They began to draw them in until the boats began to sink with the multitude of fish. See, there's a difference between just serving and serving at the direction of the Lord.

When the Lord is in it, He can fill the nets. When the Lord is in it, He can make it prosperous. You can do the same thing in the same way.

And apart from the Lord, you're going to pull up empty nets all night. But as soon as the Lord joins with you, it makes the difference between the nets being empty and the nets being full. The key and the secret to all successful Christian service is in this verse, I will be with thee.

To recognize my total need of the Lord being with me. To recognize I can't do it myself. And to depend upon that presence of the Lord with me in all that I endeavor to do for Him.

How can I deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Midianites? Lord, my dad is nothing and I'm the least of my father's household. I will be with thee, the Lord answered. And thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

And so Gideon said, look, if I've found grace in your sight, then show me a sign that you've talked with me. He thought, man, I'm dreaming. This is wild.

If you really chose me, then give me some kind of a sign, Lord. I need a sign. Now, Gideon was the kind of guy that was careful and he wanted to make sure.

And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think that God respects honest doubt. I think there is a dishonest doubt that no one respects.

There are some people who come up with a question and just the way they ask the question, you know they don't want an answer. They just want an argument. They're not ready to listen to the answer when they hear it.

There are other people who come up and the question is genuinely sincere. They are searching for an answer. Those kind of questions are worth answering.

The other kind, I have no time for. God is concerned with honest doubt. If you really are honest in your doubt, God respects that and God will confirm His Word to you.

Lord, are you really speaking to me to do this? And it is wise to make sure it's God speaking. A lot of people have gone off on half-cocked ideas because they had some feeling or some vision or premonition. And they've gotten into all kinds of miserable situations because they really didn't search out to see if it was really God speaking.

Now, if you've got some wild task that you feel God is calling you to do, make sure God has spoken to you. Don't just go out and put your house up for sale and take off with it unless you're really sure that God has spoken to you. Make certain of that.

And Gideon wanted to make certain. He said, show me a sign that you really have talked to me. He said, wait here, wait here.

I want to go fix you something. Will you wait here until I get back? He said, I'll wait here until you get back. So Gideon went into the house and there he made ready a little goat and some unleavened cakes, a bushel of flour.

He put the flesh in a basket and put the broth in a pot. And he brought it to the angel under the oak and presented it to him. And the angel of God said unto him, take the flesh and the unleavened cakes and lay them on the rock and pour out the broth.

And so he did so. And the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes. And there rose up a fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.

Then the angel of the Lord disappeared out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that it was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, alas, O Lord God, because I've seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said to him, peace, shalom, fear not.

Thou shall not die. So Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord and he called it Jehovah Shalom. Unto this day it is yet in Ophrah, this altar that Gideon built.

Now, it is interesting, he called it Jehovah Shalom. He's about ready to go into one of the biggest battles of his entire life. I mean, he is facing warfare and an enemy and conflict.

God has called him to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. But he calls the altar Jehovah Shalom. God, our peace.

For he is looking beyond the battle to the peace that God is going to bring. And so by faith, really, the altar is named Jehovah Shalom. The Lord, our peace, because he's looking beyond the conflict to the peace that God has promised to his people.

It's really very beautiful. And we too can look beyond the conflict to the peace that God has promised. And maybe you're in conflict and turmoil tonight, but he is still to you, Jehovah Shalom, the Lord, your peace.

And he can give you peace even in the midst of the conflict. Jehovah Shalom. One of the beautiful compound names of Jehovah.

And so it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, now take your father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has and cut down the grove that is by it. And build an altar unto Jehovah thy God upon the top of the rock in the ordered place and take the second bullock and offer it as a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. Now, Gideon's dad was an idolater.

Gideon's dad had his own place of worship, a grove with the altar of Baal or an idol of Baal there where they worshiped in the grove. And so God says, now take a second bullock, build another altar, cut down the grove that your father has, his place of worship, throw down the altar of Baal, build an altar unto God and offer the second bullock using the wood of this grove as the fire and all. And so Gideon took ten men, his servants, and he did as the Lord said unto him.

And so it was, because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, that he could not do it at daytime, so he did it by night. And when the men of the city rose up early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down and the grove was cut down that was by it and a second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said to one another, Who did it? And they inquired and asked.

And they said, Gideon the son of Joash did it. And so the men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son that he may die, because he has cast down the altar of Baal and because he has cut down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death while it is yet morning.

If he is a god, let him please plead for himself, because one has cast down his altar. Now, here the men of Israel are actually going to do Gideon in because he threw down a pagan god. Joash, when they said, You know, send your son out.

We're going to kill him. He knocked down the altar of Baal. And he said, Are you pleading for Baal? For a pagan deity? Truly, the men who are pleading for him ought to be the ones that are put to death.

If he's a god, let him defend himself. You don't have to defend God. Now, how many times we find ourselves in the awkward position of trying to defend God against the attacks of his enemies.

Trying to prove the existence of God. Trying to defend God. God is able to defend Himself perfectly, completely.

I don't have to defend God. God is able, quite well. So, they called Gideon from then on Jerobel, which means let Baal plead for himself.

Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together and they went over and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet.

And Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all of Manasseh who also gathered after him. And to Asher and Zebulun and Naphtali.

And they came to meet him. These are all of them tribes in the northern part of the land. South of Manasseh was Ephraim, Benjamin, Judah, and Simeon.

They were not brought into this battle. Nor were the tribes on the other side. But these tribes that were around the area of Megiddo, Jezreel is the same valley of Megiddo is also known as Jezreel.

This is where the Midianites had encamped. Some 132,000 of them. And Gideon said unto God, If you will save Israel by my hand as you have said.

Now again, Gideon is still questioning this call of God. Wants to make sure. Said, tell you what, I'm going to put a fleece of wool out in the ground tonight.

And in the morning, let the ground be dry and the fleece wet. Then I'll know. In the morning when Gideon woke up, he wrung a cup of water out of the fleece and the ground was dry.

And he thought, well, maybe that was just a, you know, who knows? Maybe fleece gathers moisture at night when the ground doesn't. Lord, let's reverse the process just to make sure. Tonight, I'm going to put the same fleece out there on the ground.

Let the ground be all wet with dew. Let the fleece be dry. So in the morning, he came out again.

And so the ground was all wet with dew. The fleece was dry. And so he figured that it was the Lord.

Now, because of this, there are many people who seek to discern the voice of God by offering some kind of a fleece before the Lord. And so you've heard of a person offering a fleece before God. Lord, if they call by 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, then I'll know, you know.

And you set up some kind of a fleece before God. Some kind of a condition for God to meet so that you'll know that it's really God speaking to your heart. I really don't know about fleeces today.

I don't know how valid they are for us as the children of the Lord to seek to ascertain the will of God by a fleece. In the period of the Old Testament, there were many methods by which they sought to ascertain the will of God. One of them was by casting of lots.

And even carried over into the New Testament, when Judas Iscariot died, Peter said to the disciples, we've got to get someone else to take his place. And so, let's cast lots to see which one God has chosen, whether it be Barsabbas or Matthias. And so, the disciples cast lots to ascertain the will of God.

But all of this was prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church. After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church, we do not read of anywhere where they cast lots or where they used fleeces to ascertain the will of God. But it seemed that once the Holy Spirit had begun to direct the activities of the church, there was a greater certainty in the ascertaining of the will of God just by the direct leading of the Holy Spirit.

So, Paul said, and it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us. We were determined to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbade us. The Holy Spirit said, separate unto me Paul and Barnabas for the work that I have called them to do.

And the Holy Spirit was directing in such a positive way, there seemed to be no need of setting out a condition for God to fulfill, for them to ascertain, or there was no need of casting lots or trying to discern the will of God in some type of an ambiguous way. Paul, after 14 days on that ship driven in the storm on the Mediterranean, stood up and said, men and brethren, be of good cheer. Last night an angel of the Lord stood by me.

And he told me that though the ship was going to be wrecked, there would be no loss of life. And the angel of the Lord directed Paul. It wasn't a fleece kind of a thing.

It wasn't a lot. So, I don't know about fleeces today. I know that some people set out conditions for God to fill.

And that I suppose is alright. But I just don't know about them. I personally don't try to fleece God.

And I'm just not certain about that practice. Though it was done in the Old Testament, I'm not really certain about it today. But each person I guess to his own whatever method that you have devised to really discern.

What I feel if it works great, you know, whatever you've got, as long as it works, that's tremendous. And people, we all relate to God in our own individual styles. God doesn't really, you know, follow patterns.

You can't really set God into a pattern. And I sort of like it that you can't. I like the diversities with which God deals with people's lives.

Because we are so diverse from each other. And so, Gideon used this fleece to ascertain the will of God. I don't know if you would set out a piece of wool tonight.

I would in morning would think that the wool and the ground would all be wet. Then what do you do? You pray. So in chapter 7, when Jerobel, or Jerobabel, get the other B in there, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him rose up early and they pitched beside the well of Herod.

Now, the well of Herod is still there today. It is at the base of Mount Gilboa or in the range of Gilboa. Actually, Gilead is all a part of that range.

And there at the base is this beautiful little spring with the water that comes flowing forth. There's a kibbutz there now. And the people at the kibbutz have made a neat big swimming pool.

Huge pool. And this spring now feeds the pool. But there is this little stream by there and you can still go down and lap up the water like a dog if you like and be chosen for Gideon's army.

And so, the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Mora in the valley. So, out from Mount Gilboa area, there is this valley there. And the other side of the valley, this little hill of Mora.

It isn't really a mountain, but a hillside. And encamped in that valley was this huge host of the Midianites. The Lord said unto Gideon, Gideon, you've got too many people for me to give the Midianites into their hands.

Now, at this point, there were 132,000 Midianites and there were about 135,000 Midianites. 32,000 who had gathered together with Gideon. God said you've got too many people.

Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me saying my own hand has saved me. Now, the thing that God was concerned in is that people would glory in the work of God and take glory to themselves for the work of God. God wants to work.

But when God works, He wants the glory for the work that He has done. He doesn't want people praising the instrument. He wants people praising Him.

And if God would deliver the Midianites into the hands of Gideon's army with 32,000 men, they would go around taking glory for the victory instead of giving glory to the Lord. Now, it was interesting when we were in Israel prior to 1973, the Israelis were extremely proud of the 1967 war. They were very proud of their victory over the Syrians and the Egyptians and the Jordanians.

Everywhere you went, you would hear the Israelis boasting of their tremendous fighting power. And we would oftentimes say, well, don't you think that God was with you? And they would smirk. And they would tell of the fighting power of the Israeli soldier.

And they were really glorying themselves in that victory. In the Yom Kippur War, there came a different attitude. They came within a hair's breadth of being defeated in 1973 in the Yom Kippur War.

They were close to defeat. They were very smug. They felt that that Bar Lev line down the Suez Canal could not be taken.

It fell within 24 hours. They thought that their fortifications on the Golan Heights were impenetrable. They were crossed within the first 24 hours.

And Israel was at the brink of defeat in the Yom Kippur War. And it was only a series of miracles that the nation was spared. And so after the Yom Kippur War, there wasn't so much talk anymore about the Israeli army and its powers and so forth.

But there was more talk about God after the Yom Kippur War. Now after the next war, when they wipe out Russia, there's only going to be talk of God. Because they'll know that that's the only way it could have happened.

God oftentimes makes things so ludicrous that it's very obvious that only God could have done it. And so God declares at the time of the Russian army defeated, he said, and I will be sanctified before the nations of the world and they will know that I am the God of Israel. Now we are trembling before Russia.

We're really afraid to say to Russia, get out of Afghanistan. Or we're going to send our troops over there and drive you out. We're afraid to say that.

We are afraid of a confrontation with Russia because we know the tremendous military might of Russia today. We know of the nuclear warheads. We know of the rockets.

We know of all of their sophisticated weaponry and we're fearful of a confrontation with Russia. The world is trembling before this tremendous military power. And when Israel utterly wipes them out, you'll know that there's only one reason for it and that's God.

So God often in the history of Israel made the odds totally ludicrous because these are a proud people. And if God would deliver the Midianites into the hand of Gideon with 32,000, they would go around bragging on their tremendous fighting ability. We were outnumbered five to one, but man, we whipped them.

So God said, Gideon, you've got too many. If I deliver the Midianites into the hands, they're going to vaunt themselves. They're going to be puffed up and proud of what they have done.

And they'll say, we with our own power, our own hand have saved ourselves. So go out and proclaim in the ears of the people saying, whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And so of the 32,000 who came to fight with Gideon, 22,000 were afraid to fight.

So they went home. Now, there was a reason why God wanted to get rid of the fearful. It's not good to have men who are really frightened in the battle lines with you for they're apt to panic in the time of crisis.

And to flee and leave that flank exposed. So God first got rid of the fearful. Looking now over the 10,000, the Lord said to Gideon, the people are still too many, Gideon.

They're still apt to boast themselves. Odds of 13 to 1, too many, Gideon. You got to get rid of some more.

I don't want Israel glorying in this. I want the glory for this. So take them down to the water, the water that comes out of the well of Herod there, and let them get a drink.

And you watch them as they are drinking. And those that get down and put their face in the water, send them home. But those that pick the water up in their hand and laugh it out of their hand like a dog, with these men will I deliver the Midianites into your hands.

So Gideon took them down to the little stream that flows out from the well of Herod. Watch the men as they drank their water. And 300 men picked it up in their hands and laughed it as a dog.

9,700 got down on all fours and put their face in the water and were sent home. And God said, now with these 300 will I deliver the Midianites into your hand. And so the Lord said to Gideon, if you're afraid to go down, then take your servant and you slip down tonight to the host of the Midianites and you just listen.

So Gideon had fear about this whole thing and who wouldn't at this point? You've got 300 men and that huge army out there. And so Gideon with his servant, the army was like grasshoppers for multitude, camels without number. And so Gideon came close to the camp at night and outside of a tent he was listening with his servant and there was a man inside who was telling his dream.

He said, I had a weird dream. There was a cake of barley bread. It tumbled into the host of Midian and it came unto a tent and it smote it that it fell and overthrew it and the tent lay along.

And a fellow who could interpret dreams answered and said, this is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel. For into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all of the host. And so it was when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation that he worshiped and he returned to the host of Israel and said, arise for the Lord has delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

Now Gideon first of all was testing to make sure it's the angel. Let me bring out an offering and he saw the miracle there. Then he put out the fleece and now here's the final thing.

He slips down and God confirms it once more. And so there are actually three confirmations to the call of God to Gideon. And so he divided the 300 men into three companies.

He put a trumpet in every man's hand with empty pitchers, lamps within the pitchers. He said unto them, look on me and do likewise. When we come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, ye shall do.

When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye your trumpets also on every side of the camp and say the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. So Gideon and the 300 men that were with him came to the outside of the camp beginning in the middle watch. About midnight.

They had but newly set the watch and they blew the trumpets. They broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, held the lamps in their left hands, the trumpets in their right hands to blow.

And they cried the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp and all of the host ran and cried and fled. Now Gideon's men just stood there blowing their trumpets and holding up the pitchers.

And the Midianites became so startled and so discomfited they began swinging their swords at each other in the darkness and in the confusion. They began to wipe each other out and they began to run while Gideon and his men were just standing there blowing their trumpets. God has interesting ways of turning the enemy on his heel.

And so the 300 blew the trumpets. The Lord set every man sword against his fellow even throughout all the host and the host fled. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali and Asher and out of Manasseh and they pursued after the Midianites.

And Gideon sent messengers throughout all of Mount Ephraim saying, come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters to Bethphara and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together and took the waters to Bethphara and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeb.

And they slew Oreb upon a rock and Zeb they slew at the winepress of Zeb. And they pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gideon on the other side of Jordan. And so the men of Ephraim then said to him, why have you served us thus? Why didn't you call us when you wanted to fight with the Midianites? And they began to chide him sharply and we'll get into that next week.

The problem we have with the Ephraimites because he didn't call them. Well, he had called them. They didn't respond.

But that's all part of next week's story. And we'll move on in the book of Judges and getting to that interesting character of Samson also next week. Shall we stand? Important things to remember from tonight's lesson.

Number one, God has a work to do. He's calling for your help. Non-involvement in the work of God will bring a curse upon your life.

When God does His work, He wants it done in such a way as He receives the glory from it. God doesn't want you front stage taking vows for His performance as people are so often prone to do. Taking credit for what God has done.

Taking glory for what God has wrought. God does not want to share His glory. He wants the glory for the work that He has accomplished.

And that is why He goes to such ridiculous measures. That's why He uses such ridiculous instruments. So that the instrument isn't prone to glory in Himself, but can only glory in God who has done His work.

God uses unlikely people and weird situations to accomplish His work in order that men will glory in God rather than in the genius, the brilliance, or whatever of men as we are so prone to do. Learn the lesson of serving the Lord. Don't turn from Him to other gods.

For as long as he sought the Lord, the Scriptures said concerning Asa, God made His way to prosper. As long as you seek the Lord, God will be with you and bless you. But if you forsake the Lord, then He will forsake you.

You'll go into captivity. You'll be oppressed by the enemy. Many of our problems are brought on by ourselves.

We have been guilty of forsaking God. And it only invites trouble. Walk with the Lord, and He will walk with you.

And may you walk with Him this week. And may you experience His power, His presence, and His Spirit as He works in your life and as He works through your life, His works in this needy world. May God make you an instrument of His love that through you, others might experience God's love for you and God's love for them as you show God's love to them.

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