

Gideon - Part 1

by Ian Paisley

The sermon explores Gideon's journey from fear to faith, emphasizing God's call to action and the necessity of divine courage in fulfilling His commission.

Duration: 33:17

Scripture: Judges 6:12-34, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 6:12, James 4:7

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story of Gideon from the Book of Judges, highlighting the themes of courage, faith, sacrifice, and reliance on God's strength. It emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's commission, the need for divine courage in the face of fear, and the significance of prayer, sacrifice, and separation for believers. The sermon also underscores the role of the Spirit of God and the centrality of the cross in the Christian faith.

Transcript

During these Lord's Day mornings, we have been expounding that most interesting and intriguing and instructive book, the Book of Judges. We're turning today to the sixth chapter of the book, and we're going to look at that great character, the character of Gideon. I want to take as my text, verse 14 of the sixth chapter, and the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt see the Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have not I sent thee? And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt see of Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee? Just a little aside, in 1970, I had a challenge. The challenge of whether I should respond to the people of North Antrim and fight the North Antrim seat for the Westminster Parliament.

Humanly speaking, it was a queasy thing even to consider as the official Unionist majority was something in the region of 26,000. My friends told me I was an absolute fool to even consider it, but God impressed this very verse upon my heart so that there was no escape from it. I announced to this congregation from this pulpit I was going to fight that seat and I was going to win it.

Some of my friends expressed grave doubts, but I had no doubt about it. And the majority was turned into a majority for myself. It was the biggest turnover in British electoral history ever recorded.

And it is still recorded in the Guinness Book of Records, that massive swing in my favor at that election. So this text has indeed a preciousness to me, a very great preciousness to me. Could I say when they were counting the votes in the Bellarmine of Town Hall that day, my workers were seriously worried whether I was going to make it.

And one of them came to me and said, Ian, I'm afraid you're beaten. I said, it couldn't be. He said, why? I said, God's truth always stands.

He said, well, I think at the moment the votes for your opponent are greater than yours. I said, we will have to do something about that. So he said, what will you do? I said, we'll go and look at it.

And I went and looked at them and discovered the returning officer was putting my votes into my opponent's basket. So I called him over. I said, what sort of nefarious practice is this? He turned as red as a beetroot and they have to transfer a thousand votes from my opponent's basket to mine because they were my votes.

So the Lord did it and to his name be the glory. Now that's not part of the sermon, but that's just a personal testimony. This text divides itself easily into three parts.

First of all, we have the commission announced in that little word go. That's a great little word and we'll come back to look at it in a moment or two. The commission announced go.

Then we have the courage assured in this thy might. Have not I sent thee. You'll notice that the might has a human aspect and it has a divine aspect for God uses human instruments and wields his omnipotence through human weakness.

So we have the courage assured. And then lastly, we have the conquest affirmed. Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

So we have three things to discuss this morning. The commission announced the courage assured and the conquest affirmed. I want to dwell largely today upon the courage, but could I just say a word about the commission? God is a God of action and all through the Bible you will find the goal, the goal of God.

The commission of God to his people to go and fulfill his command it is important today that every believer realizes and recognizes that God wants them to obey the goal of the great commission. There is not one word and the whole Bible of the church crying to sinners to come and hear the gospel. Yet the whole organization of the church today is organized on the pieces that sinners should come to church.

That's not God's method. God's method is the church should go to sinners. And if the church is not going to sinners, the sinners will not be going to the church.

So that great commission that rests upon every one of us is to have within our hearts this great goal that God commands us, that God commissions us, that God has sent us. And we have to go and we have to preach the gospel. The purpose of the church is not to entertain the goats.

The purpose of the church is to feed the sheep. There are so many churches today entertaining the goats and they're not feeding the sheep. So the purpose of the church is to feed the sheep with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So Gideon was told to go. He wasn't told to wait until the Midianites attacked him. He was told to go and take the offensive and attack the Midianites.

Would to God the church of Jesus Christ today, embattled at it as it is, would come off the defensive and go on the offensive for the Lord Jesus Christ? It is a shame when false cults go on the offensive and the church is on the defense. May God help us to go on the offensive for God. But I want to dwell this morning upon the courage assured.

Go in this thy might. Have not I sent thee. Now Gideon was not basically or naturally a man of courage.

In fact he had one great characteristic. He was afraid. He was a man characterized by fear.

Now let's look at the chapter and if you look at verse 11 you'll find an illustration of his fear. He thrashed his wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. He carried on his work in hiding.

He was not prepared to come out publicly and challenge the emperor. And so he took to the secret place, to the place of concealment and to the place of hiding. And then if you come down the chapter, turn with me to the same chapter and we find in verse 27 we read he feared his father's household.

He was afraid of his father's household and he was afraid of the man of the city. And then look at verse 10 of chapter 7. And if thou fear to go down, when God sent him down to the encampment of the Midianites, if thou art afraid to go down. So here was a man filled with fear and yet God gave to him the necessary courage and strength to go and fight the Lord's battles.

Because this power is God's power reaching perfection in human weakness. You will notice also that he was a man who dwelt much upon his own poverty and the lack of his own talents. Look at verse 15.

He says my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house. He had no confidence in his own talents, his own ability, his own standing or the strength of his own natural generation. He's a man who has learned that if he's going to be courageous for God, God must inject into him that courage.

Self-reliance and human confidence is all envied in this battle. I need today a courage that is divine. No matter how naturally courageous a man may be, it is absolutely useless and frivolous in the battle against God's enemy.

I need a courage that comes from God, a courage that takes away my human fears and lays them to rest and makes me strong and very courageous because it's based and founded upon God himself. We're going to fight the Lord's battles against the enemies of the gospel today in our own land. It's divine courage and not human courage that is needed and Gideon had learned that and learned it well.

Now let's look at some of the characteristics of this man that God sent. I want you to notice first of all Gideon was a separatist. He was a man who was known in the city as one who did not and would not countenance the worship of Beal because if you turn over in the chapter you will find in verse 29 the man of the city knew immediately who had thrown down Beal's altar.

They said it is Gideon the son of Joyce that has done this thing. Why did they so quickly come to the conclusion that the throwing down of Beal's altar was a handiwork of Gideon? Because Gideon had not been bowing at that altar that's why. Gideon had already a reputation of being anti the worship of Beal.

I never noticed that until I made a careful study of that chapter. They jumped to the conclusion very quickly. Why? Because his past testimony was one of separation.

And while he had been caught up in hiding and in fear he had not compromised his basic principle which was one of separation. Another thing I would have you notice that his emphasis was upon the Lord. He was a man who had remembered God's dealings in the past.

Now look at verse 13 and could I draw your attention that the word Jehovah occurs three times in that verse and in your authorized version when it is the word Jehovah in the Hebrew it's spelt with small capitals in the authorized version and you'll notice he said oh my Lord if the Lord that is if Jehovah then he said did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt and now the Lord hath forsaken us. Could I make a suggestion when you're reading the Old Testament mark how many texts in the Old Testament that have the Lord three times in them. I wonder why there's that continual repetition of the Lord three times.

I'll tell you why. Because he's a triune God that's why. And underneath the surface of these texts God is establishing his own divine triunity, the triunity of the Godhead.

The Lord, the Lord, the Lord. He was a man that remembered. I believe that God's church needs to give attention to the history of God's great doings and interventions in the past.

And could I say something more? God has not finished with his church. Some people have come to the conclusion because the age of grace is climaxing and there's no doubt about that and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh and there's no doubt about that that the church need not expect great movements of God's power. I don't believe a word of it.

I believe that when the Lord comes for his church she shall be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I know nothing that can adorn the church more than a gracious and blessed outpouring of the Spirit of God. And I do not believe that God has finished his mighty works on earth.

I believe that God's works are never repeated, that they're always greater still. And I'm looking for a mighty demonstration of God's power in the end of time. And while the enemy shall come in with an end time, but the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

So we can expect great things from God. May God help us to attempt great things for him. He was a man that was a separatist.

He was a man of memory. Thirdly, he was a man of prayer. In fact, his whole life is signified by prayer.

Here in verse 13 is a prayer. It comes from the depths of his heart. He says, O God, God did mighty things for us in Egypt, but now we're forsaken.

We are under the heel of the enemy. Why is it that thou hast forsaken us, O God? This is the anguished cry of an impassioned heart, a man that interceded. And then if you come down to chapter verse 17, he says, if I have found grace in thy sight, and he makes another petition, and then at the end of the chapter, he makes another petition about the fleece.

And then there's a wonderful little word here, and don't miss it. When you come down to chapter 7, we read in verse 15, and it was so when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshiped. He didn't say it's a good job.

I'm going to win the battle. Let's hurry back and start the fight. He took time to pray.

He took time to worship. I'll tell you the test of your spirituality. What do you do? Immediately you hit trouble.

Do you immediately pray? The believer that prays, immediately trouble comes as a spiritual believer. The believer that seeks help from others when trouble comes is not a spiritual believer. A man is known by the instantaneousness of his prayer life.

Here was a man right in the heart of the enemy. He had got good news, but he didn't hurry away. He had time to worship.

May God help us to take time to be holy, to speak oft with our Lord. Gideon was a man of prayer. Then you will notice that not only was he a man of separation, and a man of memory, and a man of prayer, he was a man of sacrifice.

I purposely had you sing the hymn today, Jesus, keep me near the cross. The oaks in scripture, the oak trees in scripture, are all types of the cross. Where did the angel of God meet up with Gideon? Look at verse 11.

He sat under an oak. And where did Gideon offer the sacrifice? Verse 19, he brought it out unto him under the oak. The oak trees in scripture are very important.

Where did God meet up with Abraham before he destroyed Sodom? Under the tree. Where did God deal with Jacob? He buried the idolatrous instruments of his family and the earrings of his children under the oak tree on the way to Bethel. It's a type of the cross.

Where was Absalom? A type of the flesh hung by the hair of his head by an oak tree. The oak in scripture is a type of the cross. And Gideon was a man of sacrifice.

He realized that God only met with his people in the place of sacrifice. And there is no place of meeting between man and God but at the cross. You'll not meet God in a baptismal fund.

You will not meet God seemingly at the Lord's table. The ordinances of the gospel are right in their own place, but they have no seeming right and cannot convey seeming grace to the soul. It is a lie, lying in the face of God's truth to say that a child is regenerated by infant baptism.

It's just as great a lie to say a man or woman is converted by God through a baptism by a when they're older. There is not one word of truth in such an assertion. The only liquid that can wash away sin is the blood of the Lamb.

Salvation is by Christ's death alone. Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you trusting fully in the Savior's power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? That's the great question you need to ask yourself today in God's house. God meets man nowhere but at the cross.

I am the way, the truth, and the life said the Lord Jesus. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. So you don't come by the church, and you don't come by ritual, and you don't come by ceremony, and you don't come by sacrament.

You come to God by Jesus alone. If you haven't come by Christ, you don't so get in. I've learned that truth.

He was a man of the cross, a man of sacrifice. The next thing you will notice, he was a man of the Spirit. Look at verse 34.

But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet. The trumpet in scripture speaks of the sounding forth of God's Word. And let me tell you something, the Spirit of God is never divorced from the Word of God.

If a man comes to you and tells you he's led of the Spirit to do something that's completely contrary to God's Word, you'll know that that man is an error, and that that man is in falsehood. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are in absolute agreement because it was the Spirit of God that wrote the book. And the Spirit of God never, never, never contradicts God's Word.

I have little time for people who come to me and say, I am sure it is the will of God to do a certain thing, and that certain thing is condemned clearly in God's Word. There are people who tell me that it is the will of God for them to remain in apostasy, to remain in the world council of churches, to remain in the ecumenical movement, that tell me they can do good work by remaining in. And I open the book, and the Bible tells me clearly, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. When God says come out, it doesn't mean stay in. God means what he says in his book, from such turn away.

That's what the book says about false teachers. The Spirit of God came upon him, and he blew the trumpet. The Spirit-ordained ministry will blow the trumpet of God's Word, and it will be a rallying trumpet.

It will not be a call to ease or compromise or pleasure. It will be a call to war. May God help us to blow that trumpet in these desperate days in which we live.

We need to rally the people of God for the battle. And Abbie Eater was gathered unto him. The very people that wanted to kill him were the very people that were the first to come and stand by him.

When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him. It would be an interesting thing if I went around this congregation, and I asked everybody that used to hate me, and hate my stand, and hate the stand of this church to stand up. And then they were suddenly converted, and they became the best supporters of this church and its ministry.

Why? Because the trumpet blew, and God changed their hearts. And a man came to me the other day, and he said to me, I have an apology to make to you. Well, I said, I don't know you.

I never met you. I don't know what you said about me. Well, he said, I used to tell everybody you were a head case.

And he said, when I said that, I was the head case, for everything you have said has come absolutely true. And he says, I have seen it over the years, and I felt I had to come in this one errand to humbly apologize, to ask your forgiveness as I've already asked the Lord's forgiveness. The men that were going to kill him were the first men to respond.

So don't be afraid when the world is against you, for God has a people even among those that cry for your blood, who eventually will stand by you in the battle. I have one last word to say about this man. He was a

man of faith.

And I'm very happy about Gideon, because his faith was like my own. It was very weak. I like the men that are depicted in the scripture.

God doesn't depict them as supermen. God depicts them as men of like passions like ourselves. And Gideon needed a sign.

He was always looking for a sign. Now, it would be great if our faith was so strong that we wouldn't need a sign. But alas, our faith needs the signs to prop it up and strengthen it.

And I love Gideon when he came and he said, Lord, I'll put the fleece on the floor. And if the fleece is wet and the floor's dry, I'll know that everything's well. And it happened.

He was able to wring the water out of the fleece. But I want to tell you something more. He wasn't satisfied.

How like ourselves, when God orders us to do something, we're not satisfied. And he said, don't be angry with me. He knew the Lord should have been angry.

But he said, Lord, don't be angry with me. Let the fleece be dry and the floor wet with the dew. And so it was for God.

But let me tell you something. You will notice that both the signs that he asked for were linked to the sacrifice. The first sign he asked for was, wait until I make the sacrifice.

Tell me how can you get a fleece? You can only get a fleece when you slay the lamb. God gives no signs to his people, but the signs that come from the cross. We start our Christian life at the cross.

We finish our Christian life at the cross. That's why we need to ever say, Jesus, keep me near the cross. If you've never been to the cross, may God bring you to the cross today.

And may you trust in Christ and be eternally saved by his atoning blood and finished work on that tree of redemption for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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