

Gideon

Gideon was seeking to sustain his family in very difficult times.

Once again, because of their lack of obedience to the True Creator God and their turning to pagan gods, Israel found themselves enslaved, this time by the Midianites.

Judges 6:1-6 [New King James] *“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So 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 for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which are in the mountains. So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.”*

All the Israelites grew was taken by the Midianites along with their animals, again they cried out to God for help and again the Creator God expressed His love and mercy for His chosen people, and prepared a man to lead them out of the oppressed life.

Judges 6:11-12 [New King James] *“Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, ‘The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour!’”*

When God’s special messenger came to Gideon he was hiding away from the Midianites in a wine press thrashing out corn in an attempt to preserve it to feed his family.

To be addressed as “mighty man of valour” must have sounded strange to Gideon, but God was telling Gideon what he was about to become when empowered by the Creator God.

Gideon needed to be convinced that what was happening was real, [Judges 6:13-21].

Judges 6:22-24 [New King James] *“Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon said, ‘Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face.’ Then the LORD said to him, ‘Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die.’ So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is-Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.”*

Great fear struck Gideon when he was shown exactly what had happened was not just a dream, as a result when the same messenger of God awoke him from sleep that night, Gideon was ready to obey, [Judges 6:25-27], in spite of the hostility of his own family and leaders in his community who were dedicated to pagan worship.

Gideon’s obedience to the Creator God produced an eruption of hostility, [Judges 6:28-33].

Judges 6:34-35 [New King James] *“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.”*

The Holy Spirit then prompted Gideon to action, but still Gideon needed physical evidence that God truly was with him, [Judges 6:36-40].

God then made a test of faith on Gideon by taking away all but a very small number of the men Gideon had gathered to fight the Midianites, [**Judges 7:1-8**].

Naturally Gideon was afraid facing overwhelming odds, and God understood this fear but did not excuse Gideon from the task.

Instead, God allowed Gideon to slip into the enemy camp and overhear a conversation that would give him courage, [**Judges 7:9-15**].

God caused panic to break out in the Midian camp in the middle of the night causing the Midianites to attack and kill each other, then those left alive fled, [Judges 7:16-21**].**

God was demonstrating to Israel that victory depends not on the physical strength of numbers but on obedience and commitment to Him.

Gideon had his weak moments and failures, but he still faithfully remained God's servant. Do we have the same desire to serve God in our lives?

Gideon was a man who obeyed God by giving full attention to the task at hand, trusting that God would prepare him for any future task.

Gideon is listed in the "hall of faith," [**Hebrews 11:32**].

Lessons we learn from Gideon's life –

God will use the abilities we have already to give us more responsibilities.

God will use us inspite of our limitations and failures.

We too need to have the personal relationship with God, as Gideon had; this will help us to avoid falling back into our old sinful life as Gideon did.

Judges 8:22-27 [New King James] *"Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.' But Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.' Then Gideon said to them, 'I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.' For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites. So they answered, 'We will gladly give them.' And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels' necks. Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house."*

The spoils of victory went to Gideon's head and he began to fall into apostasy.

The ephod was worn by priests and was considered holy, Gideon probably had good motives for making such a visible remembrance of the victory over the Midianites.

Unfortunately the people began to worship the ephod as an idol, in the same way physical objects are worshipped by the people in some churches today.

The relationship between Gideon and his concubine produced a son who tore apart Gideon's family and caused tragedy for the nation, [**Judges 8:31**], Abimelech.

Gideon's story illustrates the fact that heroes in battle are not always heroes in day-to-day life. Gideon led the nation in battle but could not lead his family.

No matter who we are, moral lackness will cause problems.

Just because we win a single battle against temptation does not mean we will automatically win the next one.

Sometimes Satan's strongest attacks come after a victory!

Judges 8:33-35 [New King James] *“So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.”*

The people, lacking a strong leader, very soon went back to old practices.