

Judges 6:28 - 7:3 - Thursday, October 18th, 2012

(28) And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that *was* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar *which had been* built. (29) So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." (30) Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that *was* beside it." (31) But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" (32) Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

- It seems that this Joash has had a wake up call of sorts when morning comes. To his credit, he stands up for his son who they want to kill.
- It's not just that he stands up for his son it's how he stands up for his son. Notice he says if Baal is a god then let him plead for himself.
- It's hard to believe they want to kill him for doing what God told him. This speaks to how far a nation and a family can get away from God.

(33) Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. (34) But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.

- Being that we went into great detail in an in depth study of the baptism with the Holy Spirit back with Othniel in chapter three we won't here.
- Suffice it to say like Othniel, with Gideon we once again see the Spirit of the Lord coming "upon" him in order to empower him for battle.
- The bottom line is, absent the power of the Holy Spirit, which comes vis-à-vis the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we have no hope of victory.

(35) 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. (36) So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— (37) look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is* dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." (38) And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. (39) Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." (40) And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

- We end with a rather well known passage commonly referred to as "laying out a fleece before the Lord" to determine the will of the Lord.
- Two times, Gideon puts the fleece out to seek yet another two confirmations from the Lord that He will save Israel by his hand as He said.
- Now, this matter of putting a fleece before the Lord has been the subject of much debate amongst many a Bible teacher and commentator.

- One camp says that laying a fleece before the Lord is evidence of one who does not trust the Lord, thus they put this test before the Lord.
- Others say that there's nothing wrong with laying a fleece before the Lord in order to confirm that one is truly following the will of the Lord.
- So, which is it? Does laying a fleece before the Lord mean I don't have enough faith in the Lord or that I need confirmation from the Lord?

- Answer, yes! I know that may sound too coy, but hear me out. Sometimes we need to seek the Lord for confirmation as to what His will is.
- However, Gideon didn't need to do this because the Lord had already confirmed this. He already said that He would defeat the Midianites.
- In other words, Gideon already knew God's Word and God's will, so for him to lay a fleece before the Lord, was done out of a lack of faith.

- The reason I say this is because he does it twice. Actually, that's the problem with fleece's, you can't base a decision when it's ambiguous.
- Another problem with fleeces is that you position yourself in a place of dictating to God how it is that you want Him to reveal His will to you.
- The question is often asked as to why the Lord would answer Gideon's request with the fleece in the first place, let alone do it two times.

- I think it's because of how good God is and not how lacking in faith Gideon is. Simply put, God does it in His grace and goodness to him.
- Also, while this may not excuse it, it may explain it, that God did this for Gideon early on, but He may not have done this for him later on.
- By that I mean, God may do things for us early on in our lives when we're new to the faith that He may not do as we mature in the faith.

Charles Spurgeon – "See how tenderly the Lord condescends to the weakness of His servant's faith, and doubly strengthens his confidence. The Lord gives to us similar signs to confirm our faith. Sometimes under the ordinances we are bedewed with grace when others are not, and at other times we feel our natural gracelessness in the very place where others rejoice in abundance of grace. If our religion were mechanical, we could arrange its force; if it were formal, we could maintain its sameness; but since it is of the Lord, it is dependence upon His sovereign grace, and we are made to feel that it is so."

Judges 7:1 Then Jerubbaal (that *is*, Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. (2) And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'

- These first two verses here in chapter seven are sort of setting the stage for the "why" behind the "what" of God's victory to the Israelites.
- So much so, that were we not told this, then the rest of the chapter and the account of what God does through Gideon won't make sense.
- Often times God's ways won't make sense because what He does isn't chiefly about our victory over the enemy, but His glory in the victory.

- Such is the case with just these first two verses before us. In recording this detail, the Holy Spirit has deemed it necessary we know this.
- Not only is it necessary we know this, it's also necessary we know that God knows us in the sense that He knows we will take the credit.
- It's for this reason that God will choreograph the circumstances in our life in such a fashion that it is absolutely impossible for us to do it.

(3) Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

- It's important we understand, as we'll see shortly, that the Midianites army was 135,000 strong, as compared to the Israelites at 32,000.
- It's interesting that God would have Gideon tell the 32,000 men that if any of them were afraid, they could leave the battle and not fight.
- The reason this is so interesting is not only that twenty-two thousand men left, it's more a thing of "why" twenty-two thousand men left.

- I'm of the belief that the reason they were afraid was because they could see all 135,000 Midianites from the hill of Moreh in the valley. (v1)
- The reason this is so significant is that it speaks to how we're all prone to fear what we see, instead of having faith in the Word we hear.
- Keep in mind that they already had God's Word that He would give them victory over the Midianites, but these 22,000 had fear not faith.

- This is yet again one of those places in God's Word where I realize that God knows me even more than I know myself as it relates to fear.
- Not only does God know how prone I am to take the credit for what He did He also knows how prone I am to fear what the enemy could do.
- Sometimes, because God knows how prone to fear we are, He will allow us to see into the spiritual realm in order to have faith in Him.

2 Kings 6:14-17 NIV Then he [the king of Aram] sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. (15) When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. (16) "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." (17) And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- There's something else here that we would do well to take the time to look at by virtue of the lesson it teaches us as a body of believers.
- Gideon is actually told to do something that God had commanded the officers to do in warfare to not have fear spread throughout the army.
- Again, God knows us more than we know ourselves, and in so doing, he's protecting us from fear's contagiousness spreading throughout.

Deuteronomy 20:8 NKJV "The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man *is there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.'

- Here's what I'm thinking, God didn't want the fear of Gideon's twenty-two thousand men spreading throughout the rest of Gideon's army.
- Just as God would have those who were fearful removed from Gideon's army, so too will He have them removed from a ministry's army.
- This because; those who're fearful can pose a greater threat to a move of God and step of faith than can a threat from a formidable enemy.

- By the way, faith is just as contagious as fear can be, and sadly, what gets overlooked in all of this is that 10,000 men had faith not fear.
- In other words, if you do the math, 32,000 men, less the 22,000 who feared, leaves you with a total of 10,000, who had faith instead of fear.
- The reason I point this out, even though 9,700 will be sent home for a different reason, is that 10,000 had faith in God up against 135,000.

- This begs the question of why 10,000 had faith, while at the same time, and in the same battlefield, seeing the same thing, 22,000 had fear.
- Here's a thought, and it goes back to the account of Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6; the 10,000 had faith vis-à-vis the Word they heard.
- Conversely, the 22,000 had fear vis-à-vis the sight they beheld, namely, the numerical strength of the enemy. This reminds me of Isaac.

Genesis 27:21-23 NKJV Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not." (22) So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau." (23) And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

- Notice that the words he heard sounded like Jacob, but the feeling he felt, felt like Esau, thus he makes his decision based on his feelings.
- In other words he went against the word he heard, (Jacob's voice), and made the decision according to that which he had felt (Esau's arm).
- Just as Isaac based his decision on what he felt and not the word he heard, so too do these 22,000 men base their fear on what they saw.

- While I realize I've virtually preached an entire sermon on just verse three, perhaps you'll indulge me with one final thought concerning this.
- Can you imagine how the 22,000 men must have felt after God gives the victory over the Midianites with only 300 of their fellow comrades?
- Suffice it to say, they would've lived with missing out on God's glory, and their victory for the rest of their lives, while 300 were basking in it.

- By way of a personal testimony, the greatest joy and reward I've ever been the recipient of in my life, came via a reckless abandon to God.
- However, the greatest remorse and regret I've ever been the recipient of in my life came via my unwillingness to have a reckless abandon.
- Had I not said, "Though He slay me yet will I praise Him," or, "if I perish, I perish," I would've missed out on being the pastor of this church.