

Judges 6:1-27 - Thursday, October 11th, 2012

Judges 6 (1) 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,

- Couple of thoughts here concerning just verse one the first of which has to do with when and why the Israelites would return to their sin.
- It seems that whenever peace and prosperity returns subsequent to repentance and deliverance, a complacency sets in giving way to sin.
- This is why we identified it as the "sin cycle," at the beginning of our study of the book of Judges. (Sin, Bondage, Repentance, Deliverance)

Charles Spurgeon – "We commonly say that a burnt child dreads the fire, but Israel, after smarting again and again as the result of her sin, returned to it the moment the chastisement was removed, or the judge was dead. Such is the strange infatuation of men. This nation was but a puny enemy, and yet it was too much for sinful Israel. The tribes had formerly reduced the Midianites to a very low condition, and now they are themselves unable to stand before them. See how sin weakens men."

- In other words, when God's discipline and chastisement is removed, and deliverance from bondage long past, sin will ensue once again.
- I'm of the belief that not only does sin weaken us, it disables us and renders us incapable of realizing or remembering its destructive end.
- To make matters worse, when things are going smooth, the intoxication of sins pleasure can lullaby us into a spiritual stupor and slumber.

(2) 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.

- Verse two is really sad if you think about it because it seems that the Israelites had been reduced to living like animals in caves and dens.
- This is what the Midianite of sin does to us, in that it will reduce us to living like animals hiding in caves and dens of both fear and shame.
- By the way, it's interesting to note how that the Midianites were the descendants of Abraham who married Keturah after Sarah's death.

(3) So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. (4) 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.

- Here were told that whenever the Israelites harvested their crops, both the Midianites and the Amalekites would come up against them.
- Not only would they steal their crops, they would actually destroy whatever they didn't take with them leaving no crops remaining for Israel.
- If this isn't another picture of what sin does to us, I don't know what is. The fact of the matter is that sin will destroy all that we work hard for.

(5) 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.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, we're given graphic details of how the enemies destroyed their crops.
- We're told that they would actually come up with their livestock and their tents, which would indicate that they planned on staying a while.
- Also, we're told that they were as numerous as locusts meaning they were a swarm eating everything in their paths, and they had camels.

- The reason that having camels is significant is that it's believed the Midianites were the first ones to domesticate the camel for this purpose.
- It's thought that the camels in particular, were that which struck such fear in the Israelites, that they would seek to hide in caves and dens.
- Again, this is one of the tactics of the enemy. He's always about striking terror and instilling fear within our hearts that he might defeat us.

As one commentator said it; "The Midianites dominated Israel because of their effective use of camels. "It is clear that the use of this angular and imposing beast struck terror in the hearts of the Israelites."

(6) So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. (7) And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, (8) that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; (9) and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. (10) Also I said to you, "I *am* the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.'"

- This passage brings up a question related to why God would first send a prophet to answer the Israelites cry, before sending a deliverer.
- Here's what I'm thinking, this crying out to the Lord was for help, and not out of repentance. It's a cry akin to the sorrow of being caught.
- Conversely, it's a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, which is why the prophet is sent for their repentance from the sin of disobedience.

As one commentator so aptly put it; "God sent this messenger to tell them where the real problem was. It wasn't that the Midianites were so strong, it was that Israel was so disobedient. Israel *thought* the problem was the Midianites but the real problem was *Israel*. It is human nature to blame *others* for problems that we cause. The message of the prophet also shows that when Israel cried out to the LORD, they didn't understand that *they* were the problem. Their cry to God for help did not mean that they recognized or repented of their sin.

(11) 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.

- Gideon is the fifth Judge, and there's more written about him than any of the other judges with a total of 100 verses over three chapters.
- Samson, whom we'll see when we get to chapter thirteen is the second most written about judge with ninety-six verses over four chapters.
- Be that as it may, both Gideon and Samson will rise from the pages of our Bibles and teach us numerous lessons for our Christian lives.

- It's important to note how wheat wasn't really threshed in the winepress. Gideon did it there in order that he might hide from the Midianites.
- The problem is, it's harder and takes longer to thresh wheat in a lower place without the wind to separate the chaff at the higher elevations.
- Again, sin keeps us low, not only making it harder, but also taking longer to separate the chaff of this world, from the wheat of God's Word.

(12) And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!"

- I don't want to take away from how serious this is, but I do want to point out how humorous this is in the sense that he's hiding out of fear.
- In other words, for the Lord to address him as a "mighty man of valor," is humorous given that only the meaning of his name suggests that.
- The name Gideon means mighty warrior, but the reality is that he is anything but when the Lord Himself appears to him while he's hiding.

- This sort of begs the question of why it is that the Lord would address him as a "mighty man of valor," when he is clearly not acting like one.
- One has suggested that God sees Gideon's not in their present problems, but as finished products. He sees the end from the beginning.
- This alone should bring us great hope because God doesn't just see us as we are, He always sees us as what He does in and through us.

(13) Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

- Notice how that Gideon responds with if, why, and where. He's actually questioning the Lord, and in so doing, he ends up blaming the Lord.
- At first glance it's really quite subtle, but once you start peeling back the layers, you quickly realize that he, and Israel with him blame God.
- More specifically, they blame God for "all that has happened to them," and there's even doubt about all that God had, prior, done for them.

(14) Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

- This is most interesting to me because the Lord doesn't even address Gideon's questions or concerns, He simply tells him what to do next.
- The reason I find it interesting is, this is how it is with the Lord whenever we ask why me, or why is the Lord allowing this to happen to me.
- Often times, the answer we get is not concerning why me, but what now. In other words, Gideon, here's what I want you to do right now.

(15) So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house." (16) And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."

- This is what I call "three strikes and you're out." In a sense, Gideon is explaining to the Lord how it is that He has selected the wrong man.
- In effect he says, I'm the black sheep of my family, my family is the black sheep of my tribe, and my tribe is the black sheep of all Israel.
- Notice the Lord's response is not to address who Gideon is, but to stress Who He is. It's not Lord, who am I, it's the Lord Who is the I am.

(17) Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. (18) Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set *it* before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back." (19) So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought *them* out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented *them*. (20) The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay *them* on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. (21) Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that *was* in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. (22) 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." (23) Then the LORD said to him, "Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die." (24) 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.

- Gideon now wants a miraculous sign from the Lord in that he needs a confirmation that this is indeed what is of the Lord before he does it.
- I'm of the belief that it's always wise to seek a confirmation from God first, before setting your foot to do anything that you think is of God.
- As it turns out, not only does Gideon get a confirmation from the Lord, He comes face to face with the Lord, and thinks he now must die.

Exodus 33:20 NKJV But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

- By the way, there's something else here that I need to point out, and it's something for which is not so easily visible when you first read it.
- This sacrifice was huge especially since it was during an impoverished season for the Israelites who were being robbed by the Midianites.
- For Gideon to prepare unleavened bread and a young goat as an offering was a tremendous act of worship not a waste of valuable food.

(25) Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that *is* beside it; (26) and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down." (27) So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do *it* by day, he did *it* by night.

- While it's hard to believe Gideon's father had an altar of Baal at his house it does go a long way in explaining how rebellious Israel became.
- I find it interesting that we're told why Gideon and his ten men did this during the night because he was afraid of his father's household.
- I would suggest that this was more difficult for Gideon to do, than was the battle against the Midianites, however, he does it none-the-less.

- Here's how I get there, it's infinitely more difficult to confront sin in our own house privately, than it is to confront sin in the world publicly.
- Furthermore, it's absolutely mandatory that we get our own house in order personally before we can be used of God to do ministry publicly.
- This speaks to the need for first-things-first. Gideon knew that in order for the Midianites to go, the idolatrous worship of Baal had to go first.

Charles Spurgeon – “He was at once to set about cleansing his own house. Those who would serve God abroad should begin at home. He was not commanded to dedicate Baal’s grove-temple to God, but to fell it; nor was he ordered to sacrifice to God upon the idol’s altar, but to throw it down. Reformations cannot be too thorough. Unless we down with their nests the foul birds will come back. Gideon had a grand commission, which every true believer might rejoice to receive.