

SERMON NOTES:

A Journey Through Judges and the Cost of Compromise

Part 5: From Fearful Faith to Foolish Confidence (Gideon Part A)

BIG Idea: God meets us in our weakness, but the victories He gives can become dangerous when dependence gives way to self-reliance.

Application: Depend on God before the battle, during the victory, and after the success.

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1. God's people forgot Him, but desperation forced them to remember.

Judges 5:31b-6:10 (NLT)

Then there was peace in the land for forty years.

Gideon Becomes Israel's Judge

¹ The Israelites did evil in the Lord's sight. So the Lord handed them over to the Midianites for seven years. ² The Midianites were so cruel that the Israelites made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. ³ Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, marauders from Midian, Amalek, and the people of the east would attack Israel, ⁴ camping in the land and destroying crops as far away as Gaza. They left the Israelites with nothing to eat, taking all the sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. ⁵ These enemy hordes, coming with their livestock and tents, were as thick as locusts; they arrived on droves of camels too numerous to count. And they stayed until the land was stripped bare. ⁶ So Israel was reduced to starvation by the Midianites. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help.

⁷ When they cried out to the Lord because of Midian, ⁸ the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites. He said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt. ⁹ I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all who oppressed you. I drove out your enemies and gave you their land. ¹⁰ I told you, 'I am the Lord your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you now live.' But you have not listened to me."

"Never have they been brought so low. Only now, in their despair, do they recall their God Whom they have abandoned. Having nowhere else to turn, they cry to Him for help. They have nothing more to lose."

~Hillel I. Millgram

When comfort teaches us to forget God, mercy may let trouble teach us to remember.

2. God met Gideon's inadequacy with His presence.

Judges 6:11-16 (NLT)

¹¹Then the angel of the Lord came and sat beneath the great tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of the clan of Abiezer. Gideon son of Joash was threshing wheat at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. ¹²The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!"

¹³"Sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The Lord brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."

¹⁴Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you!"

¹⁵"But Lord," Gideon replied, "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!"

¹⁶The Lord said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man."

The answer to inadequacy is not self-confidence; it is God's presence.

3. God's reassurance reveals both His patience and Gideon's need for formation.

Judges 6:36-40 (NLT)

³⁶Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, ³⁷prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised." ³⁸And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water.

³⁹Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. Let me use the fleece for one more test. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew." ⁴⁰So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew.

"It is not that Gideon doubts God's capacity to save Israel, but rather that he doubts his own capacity to act as God's agent in implementing the deliverance." ~Hillel I. Millgram

Reassurance can steady us for a moment, but only surrender can shape us for the long haul.

Judges 7:2 (NLT)

²The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength."

Sometimes God reduces what we are holding so we will remember who is holding us.