

11/3/13

Gideon, The Weak Vessel
Judges 6:1-40

Gideon is one of the men of faith recorded in the book of Hebrews, who believed and trusted God to use him in a way that was beyond human abilities.

Yet He is not flawless, in fact his error is recorded for us as it often is in the lives of others, in order that we might have a proper perspective of the men and women God uses.

The historical account of Gideon is recorded in the book of Judges is the longest of the 13 judges, covering three chapters, consisting of 100 verses, Samson covers four chapters, but only 96 verses.

We want to look at God's commission of Gideon as the fifth judge to deliver Israel from the Midianites, which unfolds for us in three movements: Judges. 6:1-40

- I. The commission of Gideon was in view of Israel's bondage. vs. 1-10
- II. The commission of Gideon was in view of God's enablement. vs. 11-24
- III. The commission of Gideon was in view of repentant obedience. vs. 25-40

I. The commission of Gideon was in view of Israel's bondage. vs. 1-10

A. The bondage of Israel was of their own doing. vs. 1-2

1. The people of God turn their backs on Yahweh for the fourth time. vs. 1

a. Israel turned to practice the evil of the land, "Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." vs. 1a

1) This is after having forty years of rest, as Deborah and Barak defeated Jobin king of Hazor. Judges 5:31d

2) The phrase "in the sight of the LORD", indicates before their covenant God, Yahweh, without hesitation or shame.

3) This was the normal cycle of the time of the Judges, remaining faithful till the death of the judge, then reverted back to compromise and sin that ended in bondage!

b. The Lord in judgement turned them over to their enemies, "So the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years." vs. 1b

1) The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah, nomadic tribes in the Arabian desert east of the Dead Sea and borders of Moab and Edom. Gen. 25:1-2

2) Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Midianites and sent Balaam to

- curse Israel. Gen. 37:36; Num. 22:4-7
- 3) Seven signifies complete bondage.
2. The people of God were under great oppression. vs. 2
- a. Israel was constantly being defeated, “and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.” vs. 2a
 - b. Israel was forced to make protective hiding places in the mountain areas, “Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which *are* in the mountains.” vs. 2b-d
- B. The bondage of Israel brought them to utter poverty. vs. 3-6
1. The practice of these two enemies was to raid the land whenever Israel had sown her crops, “So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.” vs. 3
 - a. The Midianite nomadic tribes and the Amalekites invaded the land from the east for seven years. vs. 1b
 - b. The defeat of Jabin king of Hazor had made it easier for them to attack.
 - 1) Amalek was a descendant of Esau. Gen. 36:10-16

- 2) They attacked Israel coming out of Egypt, Moses prayed and Joshua defeated them. Ex. 17
 - 3) God had declared perpetual war against Amalek, commanding to utterly destroy them. Ex. 17:16; Deut. 25:17-19; 1Sam. 15:2-3
2. The enemy would devastate their crops. vs. 4
- a. They moved through the land, from the north to the south, “Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza.” vs. 4a
 - b. They destroyed everything, “and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey.” vs. 4b
3. The enemy was a fearful brute force. vs. 5
- a. Depicted figuratively in a metaphor of a plague of locusts, “For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts.” vs. 5a-b
 - b. Described as having military advantage with their speedy camels swooping down on them, “both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it.” vs. 5

- 1) Camels can travel 3-4 days with heavy loads, covering 300 miles without food and water.
 - 2) This is the first time camels are mentioned for military use.
4. The people of God resorted to call upon their God. vs. 6
- a. The summary statement states their difficult condition, “So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites.” vs. 6a
* The word poverty “dalal”, means to languish, hang down, to be weak and defeated.
 - b. The children of Israel looked once again to the help of God, “and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.” vs. 6b
* This is the fifth time we read the phrase “cried out to the LORD”.
Judges 3:9, 15; 4:3; 5:28; 6:6
- C. The cry of Israel from their bondage was met with a sharp rebuke. vs. 7-10
1. The children of Israel knew God was gracious, “And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel.” vs. 7-8a
 - a. Prophets primarily were sent by God to call His people to repent from sin.

- b. Prophets secondly revealed future events at times.
2. The prophet reminded them of their past redemptive history from the bondage of Egypt by God, “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, and I delivered you from the Egyptians.’” vs. 8b-9a
 - a. After 430 years.
 - b. Judging all the gods of Egypt. Ex. 12:12
 3. The prophet reminded them of His past deliverance from the people of the land, “and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land.” vs. 9b-c
 - a. Beginning with the destruction of Jericho by Joshua.
 - b. Joshua at his death commanded they take the rest of the land, but they failed by compromise.
 4. The prophet reminded them of their disobedience to listen to God. vs. 10
 - a. They were supposed to be loyal to their covenant God, Yahweh, “Also I said to you, “I *am* the LORD your God.” vs. 10a-b
 - b. They were to not be intimidated by the false gods, “do not fear the gods

of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.” vs. 10c-d

- c. They had rebelled against God, “But you have not obeyed My voice.” vs. 10e

Illustration

It is like a son who always calls on his father when he is in trouble and after he is helped he goes back to do the same old things, taking advantage of his love.

Application

1. Just like Israel, Christians bring themselves back into bondage.
 - a. Some delivered from drugs, begins to take liberties in our permissive culture and rationalized the use of medical marijuana.
 - b. Others who were freed from the destruction of alcohol, begin to rationalize that there is nothing wrong with having a beer, only to make it a way of life.
 - c. Still others cleansed from sexual sin, now get caught up with pornography.
 - 1) “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of **bondage**.” Gal. 5:1
 - 2) “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him

also he is brought into **bondage**.” 2Pet. 2:19

2. Just like Israel, Christians brings themselves to utter spiritual poverty and at times financial.
 - a. They become lukewarm in their passion for Jesus and His word, as they flirt with the things of the world and walk away from God.
 - b. They no longer fellowship with other Christians, but unbelievers, being bad examples of a Christian.
 - c. They no longer hold their beliefs about God, sin and marriage to the high standard of the Scriptures, but became more liberal in their theology, corrupting the gospel and the church..
 - * “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and **overcome**, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” 2Pet. 2:20
3. Just like Israel and Gideon, the Christian is reproved for his life-style by their disobedience.
 - a. By the Holy Spirit to bring conviction for repentance.
 - b. By faithful believers, to warn them out love.
 - c. By the church to turn them over to Satan, if they refuse to repent.
 - * “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much

worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" Heb. 10:28-29

The commission of Gideon was in view of Israel's bondage!

II. The commission of Gideon was in view of God's enablement. vs. 11-24

- A.** The manifestation of God to Gideon. vs. 11
- 1.** The person is described as an angel, "Now the Angel of the LORD". vs. 11a
 - a.** This is a Christophany, an appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. vs. 11a
 - b.** The word LORD "Yahweh" is the covenant God, the existing One. Ex. 3:12-14
 - c.** Other appearances. Judes 2:1-4; 13:2
 - 2.** The Angel of the LORD presented Himself as He, "sat under the terbinth tree in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezarite." vs. 11a-b
 - a.** This indicated the home of Joash, the father of Gideon, 8 miles northwest of Beth Shem.

- b.** The family name was Abiezarite "Abiy ha-Ezriy", which means "my father is help" vs. 11a-b
 - * This is in the vicinity of Schekem, the tribe of Manasah.
- 3.** The occasion was as Gideon was hiding wheat from the Midianites, "While his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress" threshing wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Bedouin Midianites." vs. 11c-d
 - a.** The threshing of wheat was done on a high elevation, beating it, then throwing it up in the air to sperate the wheat from the husk.
 - b.** The wine press was at a lower elevation, to be concealed from the Bedouin Midianites, revealing a megar crop.
- B.** The conversation between God and Gideon. vs. 12-16
 - 1.** The Angel of the Lord, Jesus, initiated the conversation, "And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!" vs. 12
 - a.** Gideon had been unaware of the presense of the Angel of the Lord.
 - * His only concern was to be undetected by the enemy!

- b. Gideon all of a sudden heard that Yahweh was with him and that he was a mighty man of valor.
 - 1) This was a total contradiction of what Gideon was doing.
 - 2) He was afraid threshing wheat in the wine press at the bottom of the hill, rather than on top.
 - c. God was going to be with him to deliver Israel and God saw him as he was going to be, knowing the end from the beginning.
2. The man Gideon responded in objection to the statement in view of the reality of his life, charging God with some sarcastic questions. vs. 13
- a. He blamed God for their present condition, “Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” vs. 13a-c
 - b. He blamed God for not working miraculous on their behalf, as in the past, “And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’” vs. 13d-f
 - c. He falsely accused God of forsaking them, “But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” vs. 13g

- * Gideon was blaming God for their past and present troubles, while in reality it is the result of disobedience to God and His Word. Judges 6:10
3. The Angel of the Lord commissioned Gideon. vs. 14
- a. The practicality of his call is stated, “Go in this might of your”, it is a command. vs. 14a-b
 - b. The outcome of his call was then stated, “And you will save Israel from the hand of the Midianites”. vs. 14c
 - c. The power and authority was stated, “Have I not sent you?” vs. 14d
 - 1) The confidence is in knowing God is sending me.
 - 2) The mystery of the Divine and the human is throughout the Bible, God works through the natural to magnify the supernatural!
4. The personal humility of Gideon is revealed, “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. vs. 15
- a. Moses likewise objected because of his speech impediment. Ex. 4:10
 - b. Isaiah said, “I am but a youth”, “Woe is me, I am a sinful man.” Is. 1:6; 6:5
 - c. Jeremiah said, “I am but a child.” Jer. 1:7

- d. Peter said, “Depart from me Lord for I am a sinful man.” Lk. 5:8
 - e. Manasseh was the son of Joseph, half of the tribe settled on the east side.
 - 5. The promise of victory was stated. vs. 16
 - a. The covenant God would be with him, “And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you.” vs. 16a-b
 - b. The victory would be Gideon’s, “and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.” vs. 16c
- C. The confirmation of the Angel of the Lord. vs. 17-24
- 1. Gideon made a request to affirm he was speaking to God. vs. 17-18
 - a. He asked for a sign, “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.” vs. 17
 - b. He wanted to offer an offering to Him, “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.” vs. 18
 - 2. Gideon sought the appropriate offering and to be offered. vs. 19-21
 - a. The particulars are given for the offering, “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*.” vs. 19
- b. The instructions were given to Gideon, “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.” vs. 20
- c. The offering was excepted by the Angel of the Lord, confirming He was God, by consuming the offering and disappearing, “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.” vs. 21
- 3. Gideon perceived that it was God in the person of the Angel of the Lord. vs. 22-24
 - a. Gideon responded in reverent fear, “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.” vs. 22

- b. The LORD Yahweh assured Gideon he would not die, “Then the LORD said to him, “Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not die.” vs. 23
* Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Ex. 20:19; 33:20
- c. Gideon memorialized the occasion with an altar, “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.” vs. 24
* The word peace “Shalom indicated more than tranquility, a well-being, health and prosperity, a holiness and benefit of life.

Illustration

King Asa depended on the Syrians to defend him against King Baasha of Israel, rather than God.

* The eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.” 2Chron. 16:9

Application

1. God is always looking for individuals who are willing to be commissioned to be used by Him.
 - a. He is not looking for talent.
 - b. He is not looking for ability.
 - c. He is not looking for self-sufficiency.
 - d. He is not looking for organizers.

- e. He is not looking for raisers of money.
 - f. He is looking for vessels to be used of God.
* “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” 1Cor. 1:27
2. God is often misunderstood and even charged by the people He commissions to be used by Him.
 - a. Of laying a burden heavier than they can bear.
 - b. Of allowing difficulties that make their call difficult.
 - c. Of being unjust in the way He allows people to treat them.
* “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are **unprofitable** servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” Lk. 17:10
 3. God always enables the one He commissions.
 - a. Promising to be with us.
 - b. Proclaiming He has sent us.
 - c. Promising He will accomplish all through us.

* “But we have this treasure in **earthen** vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” 2Cor. 4:7

The commission of Gideon was in view of God’s enablement!

III. The commission of Gideon was in view of repentant obedience. vs. 25-40

A. The Lord sent Gideon to oppose the worship of Baal by his family and set up the worship of Yahweh that very night. vs. 25-27

1. He was to destroy the altar of Baal, “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.” vs. 25

* The worship of Baal, the god of storms, as well as fertility and his consort, the wooden image of the fertility goddess Ashara in the groves had permeated Israel .

2. He was to build an altar to the Lord in its place and offer a sacrifice, “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.” vs. 26

* He offered a burnt offering symbolic of dedication and consecration to God.

3. He took ten men who had not bowed to Baal, “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.” vs. 27

a. Home is the hardest to be a light, but it is the first place we are called to in order to bring others to Christ!

b. Scripture tells us not to despise the days of small things. Zach. 4:10

B. The men of the city declared their consternation. vs. 28-32

1. They seeing the altar torn down in the morning enquired as to who had done it, “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. So they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?”” vs. 28-29a-b

2. The inquiry led to Gideon, “And when they had inquired and asked, they said,

“Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” vs. 29c-e

3. The men demanded the execution of Gideon for the deed, “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.” vs. 30
4. The father of Gideon opposed the men. vs. 31-32
 - a. God used the occasion to turn Gideon’s father back to God, giving him wisdom to respond, “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!”. vs. 31
 - b. The father of Gideon honored his son by giving him the name of Jerubbaal, “Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, “Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.” vs. 32
 - 1) The name Gideon mean “hewer”, the name Jerubbaal means “let Baal contend”, indicating he was Baal antagonist.

2) Later changed to Jerubbesheth, “shame will contend”. 2Sam. 11:21

3) Gideon led the town back to Yahweh.

C. The stage for the battle was set. vs. 33-35

1. The enemy passed over the Jordan and encamped against Israel, “Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. vs. 33
 - * Jezreel is between Moreh and Gilboa, the territory of Issachar, not to be confused with the plain of Esdraelon or the plain of Migiddo.
2. The Lord equipped and enabled Gideon for the victory, “But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.” vs. 34
 - * Literally “clothed” Gideon to enable him to do the work,
3. The man Gideon sent messengers throughout the northern tribes for fighting men, “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.” vs. 35

D. The commission was through confirmation.
vs. 36-40

1. Gideon placed a flees before the Lord.
vs. 36
 - a. The condition of Gideon was stated to God, “ So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said-- 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.”. vs. 36-37
 - b. The Lord confirmed the request of Gideon, “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. vs. 38
2. Gideon reversed the flees to be sure it was God. vs. 39-40
 - a. The condition was stated to God, 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.” vs. 39
 - b. The Lord confirmed the request of Gideon, “And God did so that night. It

was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.” vs. 40

- 1) I would not recommend “fleeces” to have God confirm something!
- 2) God confirms Himself through His word, never contrary to it!

Illustration

A.W. Tozer wrote, “ A true and safe leader is likely to be one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and the press of circumstances... (J.Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership:29)

Application

1. The very first place God will have us to be minister the gospel is in our home to our family.
 - a. Giving a witness of what Jesus has done in our lives, opening our eyes to sin and His loving forgiveness.
 - b. Presenting the true worship of God, opposed to the false worship our parents and family members are practicing.
 - c. Not in a self-righteous way or legalistic way, but in the love of God commending them to the word of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. Today in the Post-Modern Emergent church is syncretizing many unscriptural and false things under the guise of Christianity.
 - * “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness,

and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.’ Jn. 16:8-11

2. The opposition by family members to the witness of Jesus and the gospel can be very hostile at times.
- a. They accuse you of having changed your religion.
 - b. They accuse you of having been deceived.
 - c. They accuse you of insulting them and being disrespectful.
- * “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his *own* household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who

loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” Mat. 10:32-40

3. The enabling of God will be to cloth us with His Holy Spirit with the gifts necessary to accomplish the word he commissions us for.
- a. He will speak to our heart about what He sends us to do.
 - b. He will confirm it through His word.
 - c. He will varify it in the efficiency of the work He does through us.
- * “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in **Jerusalem**, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

The commission of Gideon was in view of repentant obedience!

Conclusion

This is God’s commission of Gideon as the fifth judge to deliver Isreal from the Midianites, as it unfolded for us in three movements:

- I. The commission of Gideon was in view of Israel’s bondage!
- II. The commission of Gideon was in view of God’s eneblement!
- III. The commission of Gideon was in view of repentant obedience!

