

“JEHOVAH-SHALOM”

*“So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.”
—JUDGES 6:24*

Gideon lived during the period when God appointed judges to lead the Israelite nation out of the hands of their enemies. Despite Gideon’s many fears and doubts, God raised him up to liberate the Israelite nation from seven years of Midianite oppression. Before Gideon experienced victory, he built an altar to the Lord and called it, ‘Jehovah-shalom’, meaning ‘the LORD is Peace’.

The Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern tribes were continually rampaging the Israelites’ crops and herds, attacking the people and forcing them into hiding. Judges 6:1 tells us, “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites.” The people cried out to God for deliverance and God sent them a prophet through whom He spoke. “I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; do not worship the god of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me” (Judges 6:10).

The external problem facing Israel was the Midianites, but the real problem lay in the internal life of the nation. Their external defeat was merely symptomatic of internal disobedience. Sometimes it takes being defeated on the outside before we realize the real problem comes from within us. Gideon’s own family had turned away from God for the same reason many people do today. Because in their hearts they have become idolaters, meaning that something other than God has become the

dominating force in their lives. Anything other than God filling that role will give a false sense of hope and aspiration.

Gideon describes himself as belonging to the weakest clan of Manasseh and considered the least in his family, but God said to him, “Go in the strength you have. I will be with you.” It’s when we’re at our most vulnerable, God will show Himself strong. In order that the people could not boast that it was in their own strength they fought, God reduced the Israelite number from 32,000 fighting men Gideon had mobilized to a mere 300 against an army of 135,000. Gideon received the victory and during his lifetime, the land lived in peace for forty years.

When Christ comes into our lives, He clears the decks of all the things that drive and dominate us. Before the battle, Gideon had torn down his father’s altar to Baal and erected one to the Lord. If we’re going to experience ‘Jehovah-shalom’, the Lord is our Peace, then we leave behind all the ‘dominators’ that give false hope, and go in the strength of the Lord.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, when confronted with a difficult situation that requires action, help me always to go in your strength and depend upon You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: What is my most recent troubling experience where I went in the strength of God?