

Judges 6 – “The Call of Gideon”

Here in Judges 6 we see Israel enter into this cycle of sin once again.

This cycle of sin is repeated 7 times throughout this book. It's as follows:

1. Serving God.
2. Succumbing to Sin / Subjugated to Sin. Suffering and Slavery from Sin.
3. Sorry for Sin / Sorrow over Sin. Supplication to God.
4. Saviour is raised up (a judge/deliverer).
5. Salvation and victory.
6. Serving the Lord.

This is now the 4th time they've entered into this sad cycle of apostasy and unfaithfulness. You would think they would begin to get it after a little while that it just doesn't pay to entertain sin and walk away from what God is calling us to. Sin brings people into bondage, and this is exactly what Israel has been experiencing.

Now Joshua recorded for us how Israel was to enter the land by faith. But now in Judges, the people of Israel were to be enjoying the land by faithfulness. But this is where they struggled. After the events of Chapters 4 and 5 the land had rest for 40 years (5:31c). They know and have experienced what a faithful life to God brings. It brings peace and rest! But now as we pick things up in Chapter 6, the cycle sadly repeats itself.

1. Israel Oppressed by the Midianites – 6:1-10

6:1-2 - *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, 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.*

After 40 years of rest the children of Israel begin to rebel and disobey God. This never pays. Because now they're handed over to the things which their flesh is longing for but they will see that it only brings them into greater bondage.

- God is not giving them these instructions and boundaries to repress them. Sin is not bad because it's forbidden, sin is forbidden because it's bad. Its only purpose is to destroy.
- God wants the best for His people, but Israel chose their own path.

- God is not a permissive parent, however. Israel's times of oppression and bondage were God's chastening hand against them. Not to hurt them, but to correct them and bring them back to Him. I'm thankful that God won't allow His people to sin successfully, because the end result is death. He loves you and His chastening is proof of that.

Now look at what we see sin causing Israel to do, they are dwelling in caves and dens in the mountains. Their driven from their homes. Sin will inevitably lead you to a place of darkness and fear.

6:3-6 - *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. 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. ⁶ So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.*

These nations came at Israel in great number and made life miserable for them. The Midianites were the offspring of Midian, who was the son of Abraham with his concubine Keturah (Genesis 25:2). Those children were sent away to the east as Isaac was the promised child.

- Midian interestingly means strife, and his offspring certainly provided a lot of strife for Israel. This is what sin will do. It can never bring about peace but will always lead to strife and barrenness.

The Midianites came in with their camels without number and wiped out all Israel's crops. The Midianites were the first to domesticate the camel which gave them a huge edge militarily.

And Israel cried out to the Lord because they were ***greatly impoverished***. This was a very hard and frustrating time for Israel. But God was allowing this to bring Israel back to Him. They would begin to see that going their own way doesn't lead to freedom and joy, it leaves them in bondage and emptiness. Sadly it took them 7 years to kind of wake up out of their stupor and cry out to the Lord.

- What does it take us to turn to the Lord? Do we go through times of barrenness before we recognize our help comes from the Lord?

- Now it would seem that this initial cry was not a cry of repentance for sin, but perhaps a cry of discomfort and a call for help. Because we'll read of the Lord sending a prophet to remind them of their covenant obligations.

6:7-10 - *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 unnamed prophet (and only prophet mentioned in Judges besides Deborah) comes to remind Israel of all that God has done for them. And this prophet ends with the simple words, ***But you have not obeyed My voice***. This was the reason for all their calamity.

- But I like how this prophet comes to them. He first lays out all that God has been faithful to do for Israel:
 - o I brought you up from Egypt
 - o I brought you out of the house of bondage
 - o I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and all who oppressed you
 - o I drove them out before you and gave you their land
- You see, God is always the initiator, and we are the responders. God doesn't call us to obedience and faithfulness and then say, *if you do this, then I will do that*. He says, *because I've done this for you, I'm calling you to live like this so you may continue to enjoy the blessings I have given you*.
- May we always remember that our lives are to be dedicated to God because of what He has already done. Let that be what motivates you in obedience and holy living.

2. The Call of Gideon – 6:11-16

6:11-12 - *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. ¹² And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!”

Here we see the Angel of the LORD make another appearance in the O.T. When we see the Angel of the LORD this is a Christophany – a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. We’ll talk more about why we believe this to be so, but let’s first discuss the scene that’s unraveling here and the reason He comes to Gideon.

Notice, the Angel of the LORD comes and calls Gideon a **mighty man of valor!** Now that’s kind of humorous. It’s funny because Gideon is threshing wheat in the winepress. This would normally be done on the threshing floor, which would be up on a high open place which would allow the wind to blow through and remove the chaff from the wheat. But this would cause Gideon to be an open target for the Midianites. So, he’s down in the winepress, at the bottom of the mountain, out of sight of the Midianites because he’s scared and hiding from them. Yet the Lord Jesus comes and calls him a mighty man of valor. I wonder if Gideon is looking around wondering if the Lord is referring to someone else nearby? *You talking to me??*

- But notice why Gideon is a mighty man of valor – because the Lord is with him. And if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)?
- The great thing is that God doesn’t see us for who we are, but for who we are in Christ. You might not think of yourself as anything special, or that you don’t have anything that God can use, but through Jesus we’ve been made more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).
- Here’s Jesus coming to Gideon and letting him know that in Him, he can experience a life as a mighty man of valor.
- I pray that each of us know this truth, the truth that when we feel weak, His grace is sufficient for us. Our strength and victory stems from Jesus.

6:13 - 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.”

Gideon asks a question that seems quite fair. The Angel of the LORD has said that **the LORD is with you**, but it sure doesn’t seem like it in Gideon’s eyes. God has demonstrated His power and provision in times past through great miracles, but Gideon is wondering why he’s not seeing these miracles today?

His conclusion was that God has forsaken them and handed them over to the enemy. He may be 50% right, but he's a whole lot wrong. Because God has said He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). God never abandons us, but He does allow us to be tried and tested. And He will allow us to go through correction when we've wandered away. But His heart is always to have these things lead us back to Him. It's not that God leaves us, it's that we leave God. We're the ones that forsake Him.

- Too often people are quick to blame God for the chaos they're in. Or get upset when He doesn't do what they ask. But God is not obligated to do what we want. We're called to serve Him and walk in obedience to Him. When we do, we sense His presence and peace. Even when trials come, we know that God is doing a good work in the midst of them.

Let's be careful not to be like Gideon who's evaluating God's faithfulness based on what He would do for them that day. *Why aren't you showing miracles God?*

- I've often said, if God doesn't do another thing for me, He's already done the greatest thing to me in sending His Son to die and forgive me of my sin. He's given me the gift of eternal life with Him. For that alone my life is His and I'm good if He were never to do another thing.
- But yet, because He's done the greatest thing, how much more will He not do the simpler things: **Romans 8:32**, *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"*

The Angel of the Lord:

Three different words are used in vv. 13-16 to speak of Lord.

Gideon calls him Lord (Heb=*adon*) in vs. 13, which is a term of reverence to a man; to reference him as a master.

Gideon calls him Lord (Heb=*adonay*) in vs. 15, which was used to refer to God. It was spoken in place of Yahweh in Jewish display of reverence. So Gideon is beginning to understand this is no mere man before him.

And this Angel is referred to as *Yahweh* wherever you see the name LORD in small caps. In verse 16 it clearly says the Lord said to Him. This was God, but since no one has seen God at anytime (John 1:18) this was God the Son being revealed. And He will eventually come in bodily form to further reveal the Father.

6:14-16 - *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?”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.”

Notice the Lord’s response to Gideon – **Go!**

- When you feel in despair, step out, make yourself available to God and serve Him and others. It’s hard to be focused on self when you’re trying to help others.
- When God says Go, believe that He also gives you the power and ability to overcome the circumstances and challenges that are before you. You don’t need to question God, He knows what’s in front of you, but He also knows that it’s no obstacle for Him. Do we believe that as well?

If God is with us, nothing should hold us back. You plus God is always the majority, no matter what you’re up against. God says as much when He says that Gideon will **defeat the Midianites as one man**.

Though Gideon lacked confidence, this is the kind of person God is looking for. And God will eventually strip Gideon of any confidence he may have clung to. God loves to work through weak vessels because then it’s obvious that God is the power behind it.

- There are some who are too strong in themselves to be used of God. In the world’s eyes they may be the perfect candidate, but God uses the weak things of the word to put to shame the things which are mighty (1 Cor. 1:27).
- Don’t let your weakness hold you back from God using you.

3. Gideon Needs a Sign – 6:17-24

6:17-24 - 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.

Now Gideon wondered if he was really hearing from God, so he asks for confirmation. Now this is not wrong, for some have erred by stepping out hastily without really hearing from God. We need to test all spirits.

- Now for most of us, hearing from and seeing the preincarnate Jesus would have been enough of a sign, but Gideon is a little fragile at this time.

So, Gideon prepares an offering, which was no insignificant thing at this time since there was a shortage of food due to the Midianite raiders.

When The Angel of the Lord demonstrated His power, Gideon knew this was the real deal. But it also instilled a fear in Gideon. Perhaps a fear of his own sinfulness before a holy God and his deserving of death. Just as that fire consumed the offering, the fire of God’s holiness and judgment should befall him. But notice how quick the Lord Jesus is to bring peace. He says, ***do not fear, you shall not die***. This is what Jesus has done for us. We deserve death because of our sin. But Jesus has come and brought peace. He took the fire of God’s wrath upon Himself that we could be spared and reconciled. Praise God for that!!

- **Ephesians 2:13–14**, *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,"*
- **Colossians 1:20**, *"and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."*

May you be experiencing the peace of the Lord today, for He is our peace! Over and over again in His word we see the phrases, *fear not*, or *do not be afraid*. This is the reality for those who are in Christ and have put their trust in Him.

4. Further Instructions – 6:25-35

6:25-27 - 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.

Before Gideon would be given victory on a large scale, he would have to show himself faithful on a smaller scale. When we show ourselves faithful in small things, we’ll be given trust over greater things (Matthew 25:21).

Now before Gideon could go out representing the Lord, he first had to consecrate himself and his family. He had to get his own house in order and stand strong for God there before He could elsewhere. Ministry always begins at home!

As we see, Gideon still has some weaknesses to iron out. He’s still letting fear dictate what he’ll do, or when he’ll do it. But at least he’s doing what the Lord asked.

6:28-32 - 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.”

Fingers quickly pointed to Gideon and they wanted him dead. But all of this is showing how far Israel has slid in apostasy and idolatry. They were bummed out over the destruction of their idols.

- The crazy thing is that according to their law, it was the idol worshippers that should have been put to death, not Gideon (Deuteronomy 13:6-9).

By Gideon taking a stand, and taking a risk to do so, Joash his father comes around. He begins to see the futility of worshipping idols. He even begins to mock Baal: *are you going to save Baal? Let him take care of himself if he's a god.* This is good stuff! Similar to what Elijah did (1 Kings 18:27).

Jerubbaal means 'let Baal contend'. It will be a symbolic name of Gideon and a reminder that he was right in tearing down the altar of Baal. If there's a problem, let Baal deal with it. It's quite funny actually.

6:33-35 - *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. 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.*

The armies begin to position themselves against Israel. And they're a formidable matchup. If ever Gideon would want to run it would be now.

But notice, ***the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.***

- This is so key for the believer to live a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. We can try and get by on our own or carry out the work in the flesh, but it will be a ministry of perspiration rather than inspiration.
- Are you relying on the Holy Spirit to do in you what you are unable to do yourself?
- Just as the Lord said to Zerubbabel at the seemingly insurmountable task of rebuilding the temple: *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the LORD of hosts*" (Zechariah 4:6).

5. Further Doubt – 6:36-40

6:36-38 - *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.

Gideon is still a man who is lacking faith. He’s already been given everything he needs to step out in faith. He’s had the word of the Lord clearly presented to him. He even repeats it – ***if You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said...***

- Gideon knows the Word of God and the truth of God, yet he’s not willing to act on it. How we miss out on the things of God or bring ourselves into further fear when we do not take God at His Word.
- What God has said, we can trust! Let’s act on it.

So, Gideon puts out this fleece (as we call it today from this story). Many have done this in their life thinking this is an acceptable way to determine God’s will. It’s not! This is not biblical. This is a man who is lacking faith and needing a sign for confirmation.

- I’ve heard of people doing weird things to have assurance of God’s will for a specific thing.
- ie. If we’re to move, then let there be a voicemail waiting on the phone at home. Or what my wife has often done, if I’m not to wash the dishes then have Brent look at me 😊.
- These are not the things God is relying on to show us His will. His will is quite simple, obey what His word says!
- ““Putting out the fleece” is not only an evidence of our unbelief, but it’s also an evidence of our pride. God has to do what I tell Him to do before I’ll do what He tells me to do!”¹

So, Gideon puts out this wool fleece on the threshing floor and if it’s covered in dew while the ground is dry, then he’ll know that the Lord is calling him to deliver Israel and that He will truly accomplish it.

And it happens, just as he said. I kind of think Gideon wasn’t expecting it to happen and he would feel off the hook from going against the Midianites. That seems evident because Gideon tries one more time.

6:39-40 - 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

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1994). *Be available* (pp. 55–56). Victor Books.

***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.***

This time Gideon does something a little harder. Let the fleece be dry and the ground wet. Now because wool has a tendency to absorb moisture, this would truly be a supernatural intervention for it to remain dry while the ground would be wet. But sure enough, God allows this. And God allowed all of this to take place by His grace.

- I'm thankful that God puts up with a lot of my nonsense. I'm shown grace day by day. It doesn't condone the things I might falter in, but I'm glad for grace.

But I find it interesting that as Gideon tested God these 2 times, God will allow Gideon to go through a two-fold testing. Perhaps this is God's way of showing Gideon that he needed to simply trust Him. Because Gideon lacked faith, God will give him an opportunity for his faith to truly be bolstered. We'll see that next time.