

135,000 Midianites waited out there to devour their crops.

The angel of the Lord appeared and called this man into service. Many times lives are lived in sorrow because they have mistaken their calling. It is not so with those called of God as was Gideon because the angel said the

Lord is with thee. And perhaps Gideon wondered why he had just a small amount of meal and here he was in hiding threshing out a few stalks of wheat. Why would God call

me? My people have forsaken him. The angel said go in this thy might. This was a comforting message to Gideon and brought strength, and of course Gideon had some questions. In verse 13 he said, "If the Lord be with us, why is all of this trouble about?". All of this trouble had come because the people had forgotten God. Even though they had sinned, He had not cast them off.

He still loved them. But here comes a great commission in verse 14. His might undoubtedly lay in the assurance of Jehovah's presence with him. Samson was not a giant, but his great strength lay in the power of the spirit of God with him. But as is usual, in verse 15 Gideon said, "My family is poor and I am the least." But we understand that God does not look upon these matters in choosing leaders. When He has a great work to be done, He looks

THE STORY OF GIDEON

Introduction - With the calling of Gideon commences the second period in the history of the judges. It had been 200 years since Israel had avenged itself on Midian, and now they came down again and settled in the plain of Jezreel. It was not a permanent occupation of the land but seemed to take place around harvest season. Like plagues of locust they left nothing behind. What they could not carry away they destroyed. The people of Israel fled into caves seeking safety. This lasted about 7 years.

I. The Condition of the Nation (Judges 6:1-11), the day Deborah and Barak were now dead, and the people had forgotten their wonderful work of deliverance, and the condition of the nation can be summarized in one word - SIN. They had turned to idolatry. They had sinned against the clearest light. Even though they had no printed Bible yet they had revelations at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, for many many years, but they shut their eyes and their ear against this light. They had had the continued presence of God. They had many sacred obligations. In fact, He hath not dealt so with any nation as with the children of Israel. They broke their solemn covenant with Jehovah which He had made in Mt. Sinai with them. They also

sinned against earnest teachings. They had been taught against worshipping other gods. There is deep in the heart a tendency to sin, and gradually there was a hardness of heart in refusing to recognize any impression from God. They were bold about their sin and reckless. They were at enmity with God and seemed to be unteachable. They were again forsaking God to worship idols.

(God cannot) in any case tolerate sin and be true to himself. God's nature is opposed to sin, and sin carries punishment with it. How could these people bear to be at war with God? He may not visit the sinner with instant destruction. Men may be permitted to go on in sin for a time; but when there is no repentance, sooner or later He brings down the rod in chastisement and destruction. The Bible tells us that God came not to Adam till the evening, but He came; that the Flood was delayed 120 years, yet at an appointed time it came. He waited 430 years for the Canaanites to repent and the sword of Joshua was commanded to work. Joseph's brethren thought their wicked deed was forgotten as year after year slipped away and no whisper was ever made of it. But years later an accusing voice was awakened and they received God's judgement upon them.

It had been less than 50 years since on this very plain of Jezreel Sisera's mighty army had been scattered as the chaff, but the old traditions of that victory have almost been forgotten. How could they forget God's dealing in their nation?

II. The Call of Gideon (Judges 6:11-24)

Far away on the border of (Manasseh) was a young man. We take it that perhaps he was a young man who was a member of this the smallest clan. (Joash) was the head of this tribe. This man was beating out some wheat or corn in a secret winepress. He was hidden from the Midianites. What a way to live - in constant fear. And this was all because of their separation from the ways of God. He had to work in a quiet manner so as not to attract the enemy. He was beating this wheat out with a stick with the constant apprehension that some of this wild band might swoop down and take away his grain.

We understand that deep down in his heart he felt and (humiliated) because he had to get off in the remote corner of his land to carry on this work. He was a (man of mighty valour the Bible says, vigor and energy and resourcefulness. And for 70 years he had lived under this strain while

took the fleece and made a soldier's mantle for her son, and that he wore it next to his heart in battle.

IV. Choosing an Army (Judges 6:34)

Next he sounded a trumpet and called the people to war. The trumpet was used often to rally the children of Israel. The sound of the trumpet summoned the people to the celebration of feasts of Solomon's days. At the sound of the trumpet, Jericho's walls tumbled. For years the trumpet had been silent.

The soldiers come and assemble. 32,000 had come and God said to Gideon, "You have too many in this army." This was a strange hindrance. Would (you) have thought that

32,000 would be too many to go out and fight 120,000 men? God said no flesh should glory in his presence. (Deut. 8:12-17) Paul says in II Cor 12:10 - When I am weak, then I am strong. Zech. 4:6 - Not by might, nor by power.

Therefore the Lord said in verse 3, let the fearful that is the self-interested - They will be a hindrance to my work. It seems that we should learn that the Lord can do very little with those who doubt and are always fearful. I expect that there were some that day who thought that as they turned out of the lines that they would never

to a man that is poor and of a contrite spirit. Poverty and weakness are no argument against the exceeding riches of His grace and power. We urge our own weakness. In

doing so we betray our lack of faith. In verse 16 He said,

"Surely I will be with thee." The presence of God means the supplying of all our wants as His servants. God confirmed His call with a token or a sign. When Gideon brought out some food, the angel instructed that it be placed on a rock and he touched it and fire consumed it.

It is true that Israel's darkest night had come, the last star had gone down, her enemy had come in like a flood, her corn fields were wasted, her fig trees were empty, her olives stripped bare, her fruit destroyed. Yet at this hour God comes and calls Gideon. Why did He call

him? He called him to get rid of the enemy and grant salvation to his people. He called him (to purge) the land of sin. And in calling Gideon, He took him from an unlikely place. Othniel was taken from the tribe of Judah, Ehud from Benjamin, Barak from Naphtali. But here He goes to the half tribe of Manasseh and finds Gideon.

He found a busy man, and when we think about the circumstances of his calling, we think about loses on the back side of the desert, of Dayio tending the sheep,

of Elisha plowing in the field, of the apostles washing
nets, and now of Gideon threshing wheat. He was perhaps
called in answer to prayer. The revelation was very
gradual, and the questions that Gideon asked were not
strange. He asked God for a sign and God granted such
a sign.

III. Courage of the New Leader (Judges 6:25)

There was immediate obedience unto God, and judgment
must begin at the house of God. And no one was better
fit for this work than Gideon. There was no hesitation
nor secrecy about Gideon's procedure. He obeyed God's
directions literally and immediately. Gideon threw
down his staff, picked up his ax, and summoned 10 of
his servants to go with him and pull down the altar
of Baal and cut down the grove of trees. This reminds
us that Jesus told a man once to go home to thy friends
and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for
thee. No time was lost. The call was clear. Why should
he put it off? God's call to some of you is clear and
yet you linger and hesitate.

He first pulled down the altar of Baal and then he built
up a new altar in verse 26 and offered a sacrifice upon it.

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His offering was a seven year old bullock, symbolic of
the length of time the Midianites had oppressed them.

Early the next morning the worshippers of Baal came
before Joash demanding that Gideon die because he hath
cast down the altar of Baal. They wanted to put him to
death because he had destroyed the grove. But Joash
reasoned with these men and he said, "Baal should be
free to exercise his own religion. If he really is a
God or a deity, he will plead against Gideon. Let
Baal punish him." This was a real test for a false god.

Therefore the people parted with the idea that Baal would
come down and punish Gideon for destroying his place of
worship.

Once again God comes and gives Gideon another testimony
of His call and the presence of His spirit with him in
his experience with the fleece. And in answer to Gideon's
prayer, the fleece was wet with dew while the earth
around it was dry, and again the fleece was dry while the
ground around it was wet with dew. This was a convincing
proof of God's call and that he was not working alone. Nor
was it by chance that he had the absolute assurance that
God was with him. Someone has said that Gideon's mother

power and of force in might, but as Secretary John Foster Dallas said, "This is a race the Russians can never win." "If we hold to our basic principles," as Woodrow Wilson is quoted by Mr. Dallas, "our civilization cannot survive materially unless it be redeemed spiritually."

VI. Conclusions of the Story

First, he refused the kingdom. (Judges 8:22-23)

Second he made one great mistake. After his victory, Gideon came back and he took an offering of ear rings and of gold and made an ephod and the scripture says this became (a snare) to the children of Israel. It is hard for us to think of Gideon leading God's people back to the worshipping of idols after he had been able to win such a decisive victory over the enemy, but this became an object of worship. We all might wish that he had stopped with that wonderful victory, but he commanded them to bring their ear rings and the chains that were about their camels' necks and he made this lovely ephod. It is a garment like a Mexican blanket with a hole in it to put down over the head. The one worn by the high priest had jewels and other symbols attached to it. But the scripture says all Israel took it for an idol in verse 27. How long did the peace for the deliverance last. The Bible says that there was quietness for (40 years) during the days of Gideon.

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win the battle. 22,000 people dropped out and left a great gap in the ranks. There were only 10,000 people left, and the Lord came back again and explained that there were still too many. But we must realize that the Lord was purifying them, and he said that we must put these men to a second test which is an unusual test to bring them down to the water. Those who lap the water with the hand and do not bow down on their knees, put them in a group by themselves. Those that bowed down on their knees were separated in another group. This group, He said, will not fit for God's work at this time. In other words, He was saying that they were thinking of their own personal comfort, and God decided that the others were more keener and ready to serve Him than the others. Dr. B. H. Carroll says of this incident that God needed people who wouldn't loose time and that he heard an infidel say that this was the sorriest test he ever heard of. Carroll said he thought it was a remarkable test - that it was the kind of test made by an old Indian fighter when testing his soldiers. He said, "I am going to pursue the Indians into the mountain, and whoever cannot load your gun as you go must drop out. You must be able to load your gun as you go."

Gideon had a great battle ahead and he needed men who were ready for the battle. As a consequence, he only had 300 soldiers left in his army.

V. Capture of the Enemy. (Judges 7) First of all is preparation for battle. As he makes plans to go down, he secures some strange implements for war - torches, pitchers and trumpets.

As he is making preparation, there comes to him another testimony of God's assurance concerning His call when they heard of the dream of one of the men of Midian. He dreamed that Jehovah with His sword and of Gideon had come into their camp and destroyed it. In verse 14. When Gideon heard of this dream in verse 15 it gave him great courage. Therefore he hastened in preparation. We would have said, "Gideon, your weapons are weak. Your handful of men are too few." But when we think of the weapon used to kill Goliath, we know that Gideon had assurance that it would not be by the power of their armor.

He instructed his men to use one battle cry in verse 20. The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. There was only one

sword among them. But it was enough. It was the sword of the Lord, and the hand of Gideon was upon it.

Gideon divided up these 300 men into groups of 100 each and instructed them to come in different directions to the camp of Midian. Each man is to hold a trumpet and a concealed burning torch in a pitcher. They come in from three directions. The guards have settled down by the watch fire, and suddenly a single trumpet is heard. Then 300 here, there, everywhere the sound of war is raised. It filled the people with terror. Now with a loud crash 300 pitchers are broken and then 300 torches flash through the darkness. 300 voices shout "The Sword of the Lord and Gideon!" The enemy felt that the camp was surrounded.

Again and again rings the trumpet sound, and the bright shining torches light the sky. They are terror stricken in the dark night. No one knows but what the enemy is in the very midst of them. Each man's sword is turned against his neighbors, and there was a great slaughter. As the enemy fled in panic they slew one another with Gideon and his men in hot pursuit.

Victory does not always go to the largest armies. Sometimes mere numbers may be in the way. Today we think in terms of

God Calls -

Special Mission Service:

Helen in Wimpies - young man

to woman today He is calling -

Not Expecting - Did not feel capable -

Impressed you - you will know!

Remember should be immediate!

CALLS TO SALVATION:

Now right where you

are - He calls you to Follow -

Sin -

By Grace - Conquer 135,000 indications -
" your many temptations & evils -