

GOD'S SUPER HEROES - GIDEON

Fighting God's battles- part 1-Gidoen

When I was a little kid, I loved to read comic books about super heroes. I couldn't wait until the newest comic book issue of superman came out. And I would be faithful to watch that old black and white television version of superman every time it was on. I liked Batman and robin. I like Spiderman and the flash, and I still like that kind of thing. Superheroes change their world so that it becomes a better place to live. They fight for that which is right, sometimes against great odds.

It is clear in the scriptures that there is a spiritual war going on. And throughout the scriptures, you see examples of people that God raised up to bring honor to Him in the battle. Moses, David, Paul and many more were people that God used to touch the world for him. It would not be incorrect to call these people superheroes because they did what they did by the power of the Holy Spirit, a power that transformed them from being regular people to being people who could do supernatural things.

One of God's heroes is a man named Gideon. To understand Gideon, you have to understand the time in which he lived. Gideon lived during the time of the judges. The book of Judges portrays a very low condition in the life of the nation of Israel that was made up of seven sin cycles. The people of Israel would rebel against God and began to worship the pagan gods of the nations around them. God would bring judgment on the nation. Then they would cry out to God for help, and then He would respond by sending a judge who would deliver them. For a while the people would live for God, but after some time, they would rebel against God, and the cycle would start all over again. Gideon was the fourth of these judges and his ministry began with the same phrase that got all the other judges started.

Judges 6:1-6, "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help."

And so the sin cycle went, over and over again. It reminds me of a bumper sticker that says: "If you feel far from God, guess who moved?" God had not abandoned His people. The people abandoned Him. That's why they suffered. God didn't give us His laws because He likes to see His name in print. They are for our good, and when you

choose to disobey them, you are choosing problems. The Israelites were having the problems they were having because of their sin, but in his mercy called Gideon to deliver them. Gideon teaches us some things about the kind of people God uses.

1. God uses unlikely people

God does not seek people who are the most outwardly capable.

1 Samuel 16:7 says that, "God does not look at the outward appearance."

God intentionally works with the unlikely people so that the glory for what they do will go to Him.

Angie Garber was born with a severe facial deformity. The surgery to correct her appearance left her deaf in one ear. In her teens, Angie contracted polio. She survived, but after months of agonizing therapy and exercise her left leg and arm remained weak. During this difficult time her mother became ill. Angie and one of her sisters cared for their mom till she died. Her brother George, who had done more to encourage Angie than any other person, died in an accident. And then crop failure made it necessary to sell the family farm. But through it all, Angie kept praying that she could someday serve the Lord as a missionary-teacher. God honored her desire, and about 5 years after her mother's death Angie began her life's work as a teacher for the Navajo Mission. She became such an effective Christian worker that two books have been written about her. God many times uses unlikely people to bring Him glory.

The apostle Paul marveled over this principle more than a thousand years later writing, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong...as it is written,

'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, 31

If we were to list the qualities of a leader who would deliver the nation from bondage, Gideon would probably have none of the qualities that we listed.

a) Gideon was fearful

Gideon comes on the scene for the first time in

Judges 6:11, "The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. "

We find Gideon threshing grain down in a winepress. Normally a man would do this on a wooden threshing floor, out in the open, in an exposed place so that the wind could carry away the chaff. A winepress was carved out of stone and was built down into the ground. It appears that Gideon was afraid that the Midianites would see what he was doing, so he was trying to separate the grain from the chaff, down in this cistern below ground level, by walking on it in his bare feet. He was hiding from the enemy.

b) Gideon did not have great faith

Judges 6:12, "When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

If I didn't know the Lord better, I might think that He was mocking Gideon. He said, "hello mighty Gideonator!"

Judges 6:13, "'But sir," Gideon replied, "if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."

Gideon said, "You say the Lord is with us? If the Lord is with us why are we being oppressed by the Midianites, and where is God's power?" Gideon said, "The Lord is with us? It doesn't look that way to me!"

c) Gideon was not competent

Judges 6:15 "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

Gideon was not a likely candidate to be delivering anyone. He said that he was of the tribe of Manasseh, which was the lowest and weakest tribe in all Israel. Then, he said that his family was the lowest and weakest family in the tribe of Manasseh. And to top it all off, he was the lowest and weakest member of his family. So, to put it all together, Gideon was the lowest and weakest member of the nation!

Is that the kind of leader that you would choose to lead our nation? Can you imagine such a leader being interviewed? You ask, "What are your plans for dealing with the terrorists? The candidate replies, "I don't have any plans. I think we need to just lay low." Maybe if we don't say anything or do anything, they will go away." Then you ask, "What qualifications do you have for this office?" And the candidate answers, "I don't really have any qualifications. I was the black sheep of my family when I was growing up. I never excelled at anything, and I flunked out of school. In all honesty, you've got the wrong man. I don't have a clue as to what should be done in our nation." That is basically what Gideon told the lord. He said "Lord, you got the wrong guy."

2. God's strength is enough

Judges 6:14-16, "The LORD turned to Him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."

In response to Gideon's long list of excuses of inferiority, the Lord gave a single reply. He said, "I will be with you." That's it? What about the battle plans? How are we going to do this? The Israelites were not only outnumbered, they didn't have the military resources that the Midianites had. The Midianites had cutting-edge military equipment such as the camel. Camels could go 2-3 days without food and water which would allow the Midianites to successfully overcome the Israelites. Besides that, the camel was just plain ugly. The Midianites were a fighting machine, and the Israelites were farmers. So Gideon, the lowest and weakest man in the nation, is told by God to lead the Israelites to fight against their enemy. And all God said was, "I will be with you." That may not sound like a lot, but if you understand who God is, that is enough.

In Judges 6:34 as Israel is called to arms, there is a wonderful statement. It says, "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." The Hebrew here literally says this, "The Spirit of the Lord CLOTHED HIMSELF with Gideon." Isn't that a great picture! The Spirit of God WORE Gideon the way a man puts on a suit of clothes—indwelling him, empowering him.

Howard Hendricks writes that he begins every morning with this prayer, "Lord, here I am. I want to be Your suit of clothes today. I want You to take me and use me. Lord, just walk around in me today."

Our strength does not come from ourselves, but from God. Hudson Taylor once put it this way. He said, "All of God's great men have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them."

Your weakness does not hinder God. In fact,

2 Corinthians 12:9 says that, "His strength is made PERFECT in weakness."

God loves to show His strength in our weakness.

2 Corinthians 3:5 says, "We are NOT adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves. Our adequacy is from God."

3. God gives strength to the weak

When we say that God uses the unlikely, the weak, we're not saying they continue to be weak. God takes the unlikely and infuses great strength into them. The greatest leaders the world has ever known have been God's leaders. They were strong because God made them strong, and we see that in the life of Gideon. When we first see Gideon, he is fearful and hiding from the Midianites, but something happens in the life of that man when he

meets God. The Gideon that we see in the next verses has become a mighty warrior, and God gives him a very dangerous assignment.

Judges 6:25, That same night the LORD said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this altar. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering."

God told Gideon to tear down the massive altar to the idol Baal. Then he was to cut down the wooden asherah pole and, using that wood, he was to build a fire on which to sacrifice the seven-year-old bull on a new altar for the Lord.

When you understand that the people of the land considered Baal to be their god, what Gideon did was a very brave thing to do. It would be like going into the mosques in Iraq and destroying them. He was basically standing alone against everyone. That took real courage. Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the willingness to continue forward in spite of your fear.

When Daniel went to the lion's den, I'm sure he wasn't looking forward to spending time with those hungry animals, but he would rather be with those lions' than to fail his God. That's courage. The three young Hebrew men were not looking forward to being warmed up in the fiery furnace, but they went in it rather than bow down to an idol.

Courage for God comes when you are more concerned about pleasing God than you are about the consequences. It was that kind of courage that caused Esther to put her life on the line in hopes of saving the Jewish nation. God gives strength to weak people and makes them supernaturally strong. Never say that you can't because if God is with you, you can. Paul said I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

4. God uses people who will give Him the glory

Judges 8:10 tells us that the Midianites had a force of 135,000 men with them when they invaded Israel in the 8th harvest season. They came fully expecting to strip the land and triumphantly carry it home on their camels, but this time there was a difference.

Empowered by the Spirit of God, Gideon marched his army of 32,000 men to meet the Midianites. The Midianites were fully armed, but Gideon, and his men had virtually no weapons. What's more, they were already outnumbered by more than 4 to 1, so I'm sure both Gideon and his men were wondering how they could possibly win. But there was more to come.

Judges 7:1-3. "Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. 2 The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver

Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, I announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' " So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained."

If you know the story, you know that the odds get worse. God reduced the number of fighting men from 32,000 to 300. Now they were outnumbered not 4 to 1—but 450 to 1. Why would God do such a thing? According to 7:3, it was so that the nation of Israel would not think they had won the battle themselves. God wanted them to be crystal clear that he was the one who gave the victory so that they would glorify him.

God does not use people who are full of themselves. God does not use people who want everybody to know what a good job they're doing. God uses humble people whose only desire is to exalt him.

Action points

1. Ask God to use you to make a difference

That is a prayer that you can be sure will be answered because it is God's will. God wants you to impact those around you with his message of hope, and you can do it.

2. Stop the sin cycle in your own life

How many times have you gone through the sin cycle? How many times have you started out to serve God to the fullest extent and then slipped back? Unfortunately, what was true about the Israelites is true many times in our own lives. When things are going well, we tend to drift away from the lord. Then, after his discipline, we cry out for mercy, and he forgives us and helps us. Then we start the cycle all over again. You will never become an effective warrior for God as long as you're going back and forth. Take what you've already learned and build on it one day at a time.

3. Be willing to stand for God

You'll never be used by God until you're willing to go against the flow of an ungodly culture. I'm not talking about being rude or harsh. What I'm talking about is that you and I let people know that we are Christians and that we live a different kind of life style.

I am afraid that we have become very lax in this area in our present American Christianity. We seem to want to be undercover agents of the lord, secret service saints. We huddle together on Sunday mornings, but we want to blend in with the woodwork on Monday morning. We don't want anyone to think that we are strange in any way, certainly not a religious freak. And so instead of standing for God and letting people know what we really believe, we many times keep our mouths closed.

Fellowship Bible Church
Pastor: Don Griffin

*In Psalm 94:14, God asks the question, “Who will rise up for me against the wicked?
Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?”*

If we are to be effective for God, we must be willing to open our closed mouths and as set forth a standard of righteousness that our nation so desperately needs.

4. Trust in God’s power

If you're like most people, you feel insufficient to really be used by God. Remember God takes the insufficient and makes them sufficient. That's what He does.