

Lessons From Characters In Old Testament
The Judges/Gideon
Lesson 18

INTRO:

- A. Judges: one who decides, who vindicates, who delivers, or one who leads or governs.
- B. There is a repeated pattern in the book of Judges: Disobedience, Oppression, Repentance, and Deliverance.
- C. We learn from Judges 5:31 that "*the land had rest forty years*" following the deliverance of Deborah and Barak.
- D. However, the cycle repeats itself once again "*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Midian seven years.*" (Judges 6:1)
 - 1. They were oppressed by the Midianites, Amalekites, and "*the children of the east*" which was probably the Mesopotamians. (6:3)
 - 2. They attacked Israel during the harvest destroying the crops and "*left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.*" (6:4)
 - a. This went on for seven years.
- E. "*...Israel cried unto the Lord*". (6:6)
 - 1. God sent a prophet who rebuked them and reminded them of their disobedience. (6:8-10)

V. GIDEON (JUDGES 6 - 8)

- A. Brief summary of those chapters and the descriptions we see of Gideon:
 - 1. Gideon The Coward. (6:11-15) He's hiding and bitter.
 - 2. Gideon The Challenger. (6:25-32) Tore down his father's idol and altar.
 - 3. Gideon The Conqueror. (7:15-8:28) Victorious over Israel's oppressors.
- B. When we are first introduced to Gideon he does not impress us as to his becoming one of God's judges for Israel.
 - 1. He was from a poor family of the tribe of Manasseh and was least in his father's house. (6:15)
 - 2. He "*threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites*". (6:11)
 - 3. However the angel addresses him as a "*mighty man of valor*" (6:12) which indicates he had courage and substantial ability.
 - 4. His name means "feller" or "hewer" (i.e. 'great warrior') in Hebrew. ... "One who cuts down" - a feller or trees. (Wikipedia/Strongs)
 - 4. Because he threw down his father's idol of Baal and cut down the grove, he was given the name Jerubbaal meaning 'Baal strives' or 'Baal contends'.
- C. **LESSONS:**
 - 1. **God Can Use Tough Times To Get Our Attention.** (Judges 6:1-6)
 - a. Israel has been through a time of relative ease and, as it tends to happen to us all in such times, Israel forgot God and turned to idols — they felt self-sufficient; they didn't need God! (v. 1)
 - b. So the Lord caused Midian to oppress them for seven years.
 - 1) The Midianites were extremely powerful and oppressed the Israelites without mercy.
 - a) Every year at harvest time, they would invade.
 - b) They came in like locusts, destroying the land. What they couldn't carry with them they destroyed. (v. 5)

Lessons From Characters In Old Testament
The Judges/Gideon
Lesson 18

- c) Many of the Israelites left their homes to live in dens, caves and strongholds in the mountains, as they feared for their lives. (v. 2)
 - c. After seven years, they cried out to the Lord for help.
 - 1) Why did they wait so long to turn to the Lord?
 - a) Maybe they are a lot like us - they waited until every possible option played out and they couldn't take it any longer.
 - b) Verse 6 says they became "*impoverished*" (poverty-stricken) because of Midian.
 - c) How many times have hard circumstances come upon us and we used the occasion to question God as Gideon did in chapter 6:13 "...*'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.*"?
 - d. This is what we must learn from Gideon: Every experience in life might be a test.
 - 1) The end result of every test of God's people is intended to draw us closer to God but sometimes it doesn't work out that way!
 - e. When tough times come, let's use them to make us stronger and more faithful.
Proverbs 3:11–12 "*My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; 12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.*"
2. **God Sees More Than We Do!** (6:7-12)
 - a. God had the angel to address Gideon as a "*mighty man of valor*".
 - 1) God could see more than Gideon saw as Gideon was hiding from the enemy.
 - a) What God saw was what Gideon needed to see!
 - 2) Most of the time we tell ourselves God only needs special people.
 - a) If we are a Christian we are a "*special people*". **1 Peter 2:9** "*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*"
 - b) We have everything we need from Him for "*life and godliness*"! (2 Peter 1:3)
3. **Just Because We Have Questions Doesn't Mean We Are Unfaithful!**
 - a. There were many who asked questions of God:

The Judges/Gideon

Lesson 18

- 1) Abraham asked “How will I father a nation when I haven’t fathered a son”?
- 2) Moses asked “How can I confront Pharaoh when I don’t speak well”?
- 3) Mary asked “How can I have a son, when I’m still a virgin”?
- 4) Even Jesus, when He hung on the cross, asked “*My God my God why have you forsaken me?*”

4. **One Can Grow A Weak Faith Into A Great Faith!**

- a. Gideon did!
- b. We can and are commanded to grow. **2 Peter 2:2** “*as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*”
2 Peter 3:18 “*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.*”
- c. Our faith does not come as the results of the miraculous like Gideon or being able to physically see! **John 20:29** “*Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’*”
- d. Here’s how our faith is to come and grow stronger - Romans 10:17!

5. **Always Remember Who Is To Get The Credit!**

- a. 300 men scare and chase an army that was “*like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude.*” (7:12)
- b. Afterwards, Israel wants to make Gideon king over them.(8:22)
 - 1) Think about it: From a farmer to a King!
- c. Gideon’s response: “*...I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.*” (8:23)
- d. Gideon knew Who was responsible for the victory and Who should rightly rule over the lives of His people.
- e. Let us, too, realize Who has given us the victory over sin!
- f. May there never be an occasion in which we say, “*Mine own hand hath saved me.*” (7:2) despite how blessed we are both temporally and spiritually.

D. The Story Of Gideon is not a ‘happily ever after’!

1. Two things are mentioned:
 - a. He makes an ephod out of gold. (8:26-27)
 - b. His having 70 sons “*for he had many wives*” (8:30) and a concubine which gave him a son. (v. 31)
2. Even though Gideon refused to be a king, he might have lived like a king.
 - a. The situation in chapter 8 verse 30 appears to be describing a harem.
 - 1) The average Israelite did not have “*many wives*” nor “*seventy sons,*” along with a concubine!
 - b. What is being described in verses 24-27 is, for all practical purposes, a tax which he requested and accepted.
 - 1) This would certainly the manner of a king’s business.

Lessons From Characters In Old Testament
The Judges/Gideon
Lesson 18

- c. Gideon's using the ephod as an object of worship in his home town is something that a king could do.
 - 1) Gideon's "ephod" becomes an idol that the Israelites worshipped.
 - 2) Note: This ephod is set up in Gideon's home town of Ophrah, the very place where Gideon had torn down the altar of Baal and the grove!
- d. Since he outrightly declined to be Israel's king, this seems to be contradicted by the name "Abimelech" he gave to one of his sons. (8:31)
 - 1) The name is made up of the word "abi" which means "my father," and "melek" which means "king."
 - 2) So the name "Abimelech" means "my father is king."
 - 3) Why would Gideon give that name to his son if he has declined being a king?

CONCLUSION:

- A. If "All's well that ends well," then all is not well with either Gideon or Israel.
- B. Gideon started out like Moses and ended like Aaron.
 - 1. Moses began with a great deal of self-doubt.
 - 2. Even though God Himself spoke to Moses, indicating that he was the one to deliver the Israelites from their bondage, Moses took a great deal of convincing.
 - 3. So did Gideon!
 - 4. When the story of Gideon ends, we read that he made an ephod the Israelites worshipped.
 - 5. That sounds more like Aaron, who made the golden calf for the Israel to worship.
- C. How sad that Gideon would begin by tearing down the altar of Baal in his home town only to set up another object of worship.
- D. Let Gideon remind us, and this may be the most important lesson from his life, how easy it is to stumble and to fall, and how few there are who truly "finish well."
- E. In many respects, it ought to have saddened us to have read these three chapters on Gideon - he did not finish well.
- F. We should be warned when we realize that many of those who once did well did not finish well.
 - 1) This would include people like David, his son Solomon, and Hezekiah as just a few examples.
- G. It does not get easier and easier to live the life of a Christian as we get older; it gets harder.
- H. Let us realize how important it is to recognize our weaknesses and to cling to our Lord throughout our lifetime, so that we may finish well.