

The Bible From 20,000 Feet Part 27
Judges 1:1 – 8:35
Tuesday Night Bible Study, June 2, 2009

--OUTLINE

- OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES AND PRACTICAL LESSONS IN IT
- GIDEON AND PRACTICAL LESSONS LEARNED FROM HIS LIFE

--BOOK OF JUDGES OVERVIEW

--Judges begins with the final battles in the conquest of the Promise Land under the first generation of Israel in the Promise Land.

--there were a couple victories in driving out Canaanites followed by many defeats...

--"Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages... Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites... Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron... Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco... Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh... And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley..." (1:27-36)

--the sins of the first generation of Israel and their failure to drive out all the Canaanites in the land allotted to them led to a complete moral collapse in the generation that followed...

--Judges 1:10-2:15: "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers [*died*], **another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.** Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baals and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them...." (1:10-2:15)

--the people of Israel essentially became Canaanites!

--this is exactly why God commanded them to drive out all the Canaanites!

--Exodus 23:32-33: "Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. 33 Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

--practical lesson: God means what He says and says what He means! It's easy to slip into the mindset of compromise and overlook commandments and principles God has given us in His Word, but as sure as night follows day we will suffer the consequence when we ignore what He says to us in His Word.

--one example is the principle of "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

--if we don't remain on guard and keep our spiritual senses sharp through spending time in prayer and God's Word, then the weakness of our flesh will surely cause us to stumble, just like the Canaanite culture caused Israel to stumble.

--in the 400 year period covered by the book of judges, Israel repeats over and over again the cycle of walking away from the Lord, the Lord delivering Israel into the hands of their enemies, Israel crying out to the Lord for deliverance, the Lord raising up leaders (called "judges" - a total of 12 throughout this period)

to lead Israel in victory against their enemies, and then Israel walking away from the Lord again.

--God delivered Israel into their enemies hands as an act of chastening in order to help Israel gain victory over sin.

--Israel's real enemy was sin... the essence of conquering Canaan was replacing the sinful culture of the Canaanites with a righteous culture that reflected God's character.

--Israel's military defeats were simply a reflection of the preceding spiritual defeats.

--Judg 2:16-19: "Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. 18 And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. 19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way."

--not only did Israel fail to drive out all the Canaanites but left the door wide open for the Canaanite culture to corrupt them by not keeping God's Word at the center of their lives. Because God's Word was absent the following generations essentially forgot who they were and what the Lord had done to bring them to the Promise Land...

--Judges 3:1-2: "Now these are the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan 2 **(this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it)...**"

--they could have learned the easy way or the hard way...

--the easy way would have been to keep God's Word at the center of their lives and follow it by faith.

--the hard way was to forget God's Word and be brought to the the end of themselves where they had to cry out for deliverance from enslavement to the Canaanites (they had to relive the Egypt experience)

--if Israel had followed the principle in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 they wouldn't have forgotten...

--Deuteronomy 6:4-9: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

--we need to follow the same principle of keeping God's Word at the center of our lives!

--GOD'S DELIVERENCE THROUGH GIDEON

--Gideon was the fifth judge in Israel that God raised up to lead Israel in victory against the Midianites

--after Israel's previous bondage they enjoyed 40 years of peace, but then they walked away from the Lord again.... Judges 5:31-6:14: "So the land had rest for 40 years. 6:1 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... 7 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.'" 11 Now the Angel of the LORD [*preincarnate appearance of Christ...same personage that appeared to Joshua on the plains of Jericho and who appears throughout the Old Testament*] 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 [*Gideon*], and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" 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." 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours [*Gideon must have been one of the few who remained faithful to the Lord and did not turn away and worship the false gods of Canaan*], and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. 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."

--2 Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

--"6:17 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 confirm that it was the Lord who talked with him Gideon made an offering to the Lord. The Lord's response to the offering confirmed to Gideon that it truly was the Lord.

--Gideon's instinct to make an offering to the Lord provides further evidence that he led a lifestyle of worshipping the Lord rather than the false gods of Canaan.

--the Lord then commands Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal and replace it with an altar to the Lord...

--the reaction of his father's household shows just how far away from the Lord they had drifted - they wanted to kill Gideon because he tore down the altar to Baal!

--their value system was totally upside down!

--Judges 6:34: "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon...." and 32,000 Israelites rallied around Gideon to follow him into battle against the Midianites.

--Judges 7:2-7: "And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' 3 Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.'" And twenty-two thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained. 4 But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go." 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink." 6 And the number of those who lapped, putting their

hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. 7 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "**By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand.** Let all the other people go, every man to his place."

--Judges 7:9-14: "It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. 10 But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11 and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp. 12 Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. 13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed." 14 Then his companion answered and said, "This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp."

--**the Lord then leads Gideon and his army of 300 people against the Midianites in a totally unconditional strategy that was dependent on faith...** Judges 7:15-22: "And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand." 16 Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. 17 And he said to them, "Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, 'The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!'" 19 So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers — they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing — and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" 21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. 22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia, toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath."

--Gideon led the army to a place they could only have the courage to reach through faith... a small group of Israelite soldiers surrounding tens of thousands of Midianites!

--the enemy was defeated before Israel even lifted a sword!

--the victory under Gideon is an analogy of how the Lord can provide a way for us through any situation, no matter how impossible the odds may appear... **we should never feel hopeless in life...there is always a path to victory before us!**

--because of the success under his leadership a group of Israelite men want to make Gideon the king of Israel... Judges 8:22-24: "Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian." 23 But Gideon said to them, "**I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.**"

--Gideon touches on the heart of Israel's problem... rather than walking by faith they walked by sight – instead of seeing the Lord as their king they followed their own evil hearts – as the last verse in the book of Judges states "**In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**" (Judges 21:25)

-the phrase "there was no king in Israel" is repeated 4 times throughout the book of Judges (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25)

--after Gideon died Israel repeated the cycle of sin – "So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not remember the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side..." (Judges 8:33-35)

--practical lesson... we need to walk by faith and not by sight – in everything we do we need to see the Lord before us as our King and allow Him to reign in our lives and drive out sin...

--we need to follow the example of Moses - Hebrews 11:27: "By faith he [*Moses*] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as **seeing Him who is invisible.**"

--as Jesus said, "the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

--Colosians 3:23-24: "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

--and in order to not forget this reality we need to keep God's Word at the center of our lives and be in regular prayer... "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak!" (Matthew 26:41)