

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#3 Are You Willing To Be A Cracked Pot?

Background Info:

1. For 7 years during harvest time, the Jews had suffered the raids of the Midianites.

2. God allowed the Midianites and their allies to ravage "the land of milk and honey," leaving the Jews in the deepest poverty. Why?

Judges 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

Judges 6:2 The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: because of the Midianites the children of Israel made the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

Judges 6:3-4 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites [FLESH], and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

⁴ And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

Judges 6:5-6 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. ⁶ And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

Ps. 18:6a In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God

Question: Did God care about them? about us?

1. God had allowed chastening in their [our] lives.

Prov. 3:11-12 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loves he corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights.

Spurgeon: "The Lord does not permit His children to sin successfully. His ultimate purpose is that each child be conformed to the image of His Son." [Rom. 8:28-29] "The Father wants to be able to look at each child and say, 'This is My beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.'"

2. Chastening is evidence of God's hatred for sin and His love for His children.

a. The best He can give us is a character like Jesus Christ. Obedience builds character.

3. Israel had spent 43 years under the harsh rule of the enemies, but still had not learned their lesson and turned away from the heathen idols.

a. Unless our suffering leads to repentance, it accomplishes NO lasting good.

b. Unless our repentance is evidence of a holy desire to turn from sin, not just escape from pain, repentance is only remorse.

Judges 6:7-10 Unnamed prophet rebukes Israel and reminded them of God's past dealings with them. I brought you out of Egypt; out of bondage; gave you victory over your enemies; do not fear the gods of the Amorites; I gave you the land; ALL you needed!

But you have not obeyed Me.

Application: Eph. 4:1 We are to "walk worthy of our high and heavenly calling"

Col. 3:1ff Live like people who are seated with Christ in glory.

Truth: My motive for Christian living is not that I might gain something I don't have, but that I might live up to what I already have in the fullness of Jesus Christ.

As harvest time was approaching in year 8 [8 = number of new beginnings],

God called Gideon, a farmer, to become the deliverer of His people.

Judges 6:12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him,

The LORD is with thee, thou Mighty Man Of Valor. [promise based on what he will become]

Judges 6:13 Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, Why Then Is All This

Befallen Us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, [250 years since Red Sea; 200 years since Jordan River] saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?

but Now The LORD Hath Forsaken Us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

Gideon's response: The Lord has forsaken us!

Question: Who Abandoned Who?

Joshua 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

God's Words To Gideon: Judges 6:14-16

1. I will give you the strength to overcome the opposition.

2. Surely I will be with thee, and you shall smite the Midianites as one man.

Judges 6:17-24 Gideon prepares an offering to The Angel of The Lord.

6:18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And He said, I will tarry until you come again.

6:19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and Unleavened Cakes of an ephah of flour: the Flesh he put in a basket, and he put the Broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.

a. This was a costly thing to do when food was scarce. [sacrificial offering]

b. Ephah of flour = ~1/2 bushel = make bread for a family for several days

c. His sacrifice = the FLESH & unleavened bread = "getting the sin out"

d. God waited while he prepared the sacrifice.

6:20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And HE DID SO.

Phil. 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

6:21 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes.

Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

Gideon is afraid he will die.

6:23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: you shall not die.

Note: God gave Gideon a message of peace to prepare him for fighting the war.

6:24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: [The Lord is Peace] unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Judges 6:25-32 Gideon destroys the altar of Baal, builds an altar to the Lord, offered a burnt sacrifice [1 of his father's bullocks] and used the wood of the Asherah poles for fuel.

Lesson: We can't build an altar to the Lord until we tear down the altars to the idols in our lives. Our God is a jealous God.

Judges 6:33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

Judges 6:34-35 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer [his hometown] was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

Judges 6:36-40 Gideon & the fleece

God used Broken Pitchers to Bring Victory - Judges 7:1-15

God's Message: People are in bondage and need to Overcome The Enemy.

1. Gideon, a reluctant warrior, has been tapped by the Lord to lead His people and throw off the attacks of the Midianites.

a. The Midianites, 135,000 strong, are moving into the Valley of Jezreel. [6:33]

b. Gideon sounds the trumpet call. [6:34]

c. 32,000 answered the call to battle; to fight in the Lord's army

God Tests Their Faith:

1. Is our faith real or counterfeit?

2. Strengthen our faith for the tasks He sets before us.

Spurgeon: "The promises of God shine brightest in the furnace of affliction. As sure as God puts His children in the furnace of affliction, He will be with them in it.

It is in claiming those promises that we gain the victory."

A.B. Simpson: "You will have no test of faith that will not fit you to be a blessing if you are obedient to the Lord. I never had a trial but when I got out of the deep river, I found some poor pilgrim on the bank that I was able to help by that very experience."

I Pet. 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are grieved by various trials: That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

7:1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod:

a. Well of Harod = fountain of trembling; in Arabic = Spring of Goliath

b. Recall: 6:33 = Enemy is camped in Valley of Jezreel = God sows

c. God is sowing FEAR in the Jezreel Valley.

7:2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee [32,000] are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

Truth: Victories won because of faith bring glory to God because nobody can explain how they happened.

Dr. Bob Cook: "If you can explain what's going on in your ministry, then God didn't do it."

Note: God leads Gideon through a process to downsize his army from 32,000 to a mere 300.

a. 7:3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people 22,000; and there remained 10,000.

b. Fear has a way of spreading among the troops.

c. G. Campbell Morgan: "The fearful and trembling man God cannot use. The trouble is the fearful and trembling man insists upon remaining in the army. A decrease that sifts the ranks of the church of men who fear and tremble is a great, a gracious and glorious gain."

d. Wiersbe: "Pride after the battle robs God of glory. Fear during the battle robs God's soldiers of courage and power."

"Fear and faith cannot live together very long in the same heart."

e. These 10,000 will face a vastly superior enemy force.

Question: When it comes to engaging the enemy and taking on enemy strongholds in my life; when it comes to standing for the Lord; when it comes to yielding to the Lord for victory over sin in my life, what is my attitude?

1. Am I afraid to yield? What will God ask of me?

2. Do I just want to be justified without yielding in absolute surrender for sanctification?

3. Do I have any desire to be saved daily from the bondage of habitual sin in my life?

4. Am I afraid of absolute surrender? Am I afraid of committing to be a disciple of Christ?

Gideon says: Go home! He didn't have to say it again! They disappeared!

Consider: Now he has 10,000 men who say they are not afraid.

7:4-6 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I Will Try Them For Thee There: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. ⁵ So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, him shall thou set by himself; likewise every one that bows down upon his knees to drink. ⁶ And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

Consider: We never know when God is testing us in an ordinary experience of life.

"Make every occasion a great occasion for you can never tell when somebody may be taking your measure for a larger place."

Key Point #1 God tested and chose the ones who passed the test.

Key Point #2 If they laid down their weapons, laid on the river bank and scooped up the water with both hands, God said they were unfit for His army.

a. Christians who are not alert and interested in pressing on and winning the victory.

Phil. 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I Cor. 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. [disqualified]

b. God can't use them in His army because if He tried to put them in the front lines of battle, they would be wiped out.

c. Rather than lose them, He sent them home also.

d. When God wins the battle, they will think they did it and take the credit. Pride will rise up; Satan trips them up.

7:7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the Three Hundred Men That Lapped Will I Save You, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: [What a promise before the battle!]

and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

By claiming this promise and obeying the Lord's directions, Gideon defeated the enemy and brought peace to the land for 40 years. [Judges 8:28]

John Wesley: "Give me 100 men who fear nothing but sin and love nothing but God, and I will shake the gates of hell."

7:8 ... retained those three hundred men: the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

7:9 And it came to pass the same night, the LORD said unto him,

Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I Have Delivered It Into Thine Hand.

Note: God has told him 3 times He would give Israel victory. He had reassured him by giving him 3 special signs: fire from the rock; the wet fleece and the dry fleece.

Note: God continues to encourage Gideon's faith in 2 more ways.

1. He told him for the 4th time: I have delivered the Midianite host into your hand.

Consider: Although the battle must be fought, the victory was already won.

2. God gives him yet another sign.

7:10-12 BUT if thou fear to go down, go with Phurah thy servant [Phurah = that bears fruit; grows] down to the host: and you shall hear what they say; and afterward shall your Hands Be Strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. [God's Mercy gave him more assurance of victory.] The Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

7:13-14 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the Sword Of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for Into His Hand Hath God Delivered Midian, And All The Host.

Gideon is now confident enough to give his men clear instructions that he and the Israelites will have victory.

7:15 when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he Worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said,

ARISE; FOR THE LORD HAS DELIVERED INTO YOUR HAND THE HOST OF MIDIAN.

God took the fear in Gideon's heart and put it in the hearts of the Midianites - the enemy. He took the courage and confidence that was in the enemy and put it in Gideon who infused courage into the others' hearts.

7:16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a TRUMPET in every man's hand, with EMPTY PITCHERS, and LAMPS WITHIN THE PITCHERS.

Get into position inside the enemy camp in the middle of the night.

4. Verses 17-22 lists the God's battle plan procedure.

- Blow the trumpet
- Break the pitchers which exposed the lamp within
- Shout: The Sword Of The Lord And Of Gideon

Imagine the scene...the noise...the lamps suddenly being revealed...the racket...the confusion for the Midianites, roused from a sound sleep. Gideon had a lamp inside the empty pitcher. God said "Break the pitcher." The light will shine through the broken pitcher.

7:21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

Victory depended on obedience and commitment.

Consider: Clay pots are a symbol of the earthen vessels that we are. II Cor. 4:7-12

1. God is not interested in polishing, smoothing and making bigger and better earthen vessels.

2. Victory comes when the clay pot is broken to let His light and life shine out.

Contradiction: When I try to keep my clay pot intact and let His light shine forth.

It cannot be done.

3. God has deposited His life and the work of the Holy Spirit within our earthen vessels.

4. Until the vessel is broken, it is extremely hard for the light to shine through.

5. I must be willing to let Him break me of everything He does not want in my life.

6. I must be willing to allow the Holy Spirit to mortify [put to death] the deeds of the flesh in me.

7. Our suffering and brokenness allow the light and power within us to come forth.

I dedicate my troubles, fears, frustrations, etc. to you so you can use them for YOUR GLORY. Let people see in me the reality of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

Worship God with my troubles and my sorrows.

This is my sacrifice of PRAISE and WORSHIP to Him.