

September 27, 2015

Heroes of Faith

"The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged Joash the Abierzrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you mighty warrior."...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."

Judges 6:11-14

"Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promise—look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."

Judges 6:36-40

"The Lord said to Gideon, "With three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands."

Judges 7:7-25

After the death of Joshua the people of Israel spread across the land that they had conquered and populated it. Through the Law of Moses God created a theocracy, a nation that he ruled directly. But without a human leader to look to for guidance and direction Israel began to do pretty much whatever they wanted to, most of it not good.

Over the next several decades Israel would repeat this destructive pattern again and again. The people would start to disobey, God would discipline them for their sinfulness by allowing them to fall victim to some other nation, and eventually

God would call a leader who would deliver them from their enemies and restore them to some semblance of obedience.

These leaders that God called to rescue his people were called Judges and their number includes well known heroes like Samson and Gideon and Samuel and much less well known heroes like Othneil and Shamgar and Jephthah. Each time these heroes of faith would deliver Israel from its enemies only to have them fall into sin again.

Among these judges called by God to deliver his people was Gideon, the reluctant warrior. God's angel called Gideon while he was threshing wheat in a winepress. He was doing this because the people of Midian regularly raided and plundered Israel. The call was pretty straight forward. God commanded Gideon to lead an army against Midian a free his people from their oppression.

Gideon, however, lacked the courage to really believe that God was truly calling him and so he asked for and received several signs from God that reassured him that in fact he was being called to lead Israel in battle. The tests that Gideon set for God included a meal offering and a wool fleece. Through these tests God reassured Gideon that his call to deliver Israel was real, but the cost of Gideon's doubt was an impossible victory with little or no glory in it for Gideon.

After the assurances of the signs Gideon called out the armies of Israel to go against the Midianites, but because of his doubt God kept reducing the size of Gideon's army. First, the Lord commanded Gideon to send home any of the soldiers who had responded to his call who were afraid. Nearly half of Gideon's army went home in fear. Then God tested the remaining army reducing their number to three hundred. Gideon was now commanded to go up against the vast Midianite army with three hundred warriors. With a simple ruse and the power of God's hand the armies of Midian were almost completely destroyed

mostly by their own hand. After God's great victory through Gideon the people returned to following the Lord for a time, but soon wandered off again.

The lesson of Gideon is found in the Lord's original call to him. God says, *"Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you."*

Gideon's story is a reminder to us, I think, that when God calls us to do anything we only need go with what strength we have, no matter how little that may be. In the end the success of whatever God calls us to do will be the product of his great strength working through our weakness. It is never our strength, but always his that creates success.



Announcements

- Ladies Bible Study will meet again tomorrow evening, September 28th, at 7:00 here at the church building.
- Our midweek Bible study will meet here at the building on Wednesday at 7:00.
- Help yourselves to a new daily devotional guide called **Power for Today**. The church purchases these for your use.

Upcoming Events

- The Great Falls church is hosting a **"Does God Exist" Workshop** with John Clayton September 27th through the 30th.
- The Belgrade church is hosting a **Shepherds Network** event January 8-10 for church leaders.