



Background to the story of Gideon

### The Book of Judges

Gideon was born into the weakest clan of Israel about a thousand years before Jesus was born; Gideon was considered the least in his family! Despite his family background, God chose him to deliver Israel from the Midianites, the Amalekites and people of the East. He was to become one of the greatest of all the Judges and his name is included in the great "Hall of Faith" found in chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, where it records in **verse 34** *...whose weakness was turned to strength; who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.*

He lived at a time when the nation of Israel was doing evil in the sight of the Lord; they had again deserted their faith in *Jehovah* to follow worthless idols. When Israel lived under a Judge, they prospered as a people but whenever a Judge died they returned to worshipping pagan gods of the land the Lord had given them.

**Judges 21:25** *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.* Does that sound like society today?

The LORD, *Jehovah* had saved the children of Israel 450 years earlier through Moses and 40 years later He led them into the Promised Land under the direction of Joshua. After Joshua's death they forgot all the Lord had done for them and ceased to listen to *Jehovah*.

The Midianites came annually to steal their crops, kill their animals and destroy their way of living. The children of Israel ran away and hid in caves, dens and strongholds – sound familiar steal, kill and destroy?

However scripture encourages us *...Because of the Lord's great love they were not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; so great is your faithfulness.* (**Lamentations 3:22-23**)

Therefore, God kept His covenant promise to Israel's founding father, the man of faith, Abraham. The promise was given to him and to his descendants, to have a land of their own, to be made into a great nation and to bless them. We too, as spiritual descendants of Abraham, have that same blessing in Christ Jesus.

God is just, both full of grace and mercy, holy and righteous, He will do whatever is necessary to bring His children to repentance and bring them back into relationship with their creator. God, who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, to make a way possible that with man is impossible!

We give praise to the Lord, that in His loving kindness He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us, paying the price for our sins and giving us a new life in the risen Christ – as the great hymn reminds us: strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

His good, pleasing and perfect will cannot change; if you haven't already, you could make a choice to believe in His Son today.

Post-Pentecost we are blessed to have the full revelation of God's plan (the mystery that is in Christ). Those who have received Jesus by faith have been given the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live a righteous life that without faith in Him would be impossible. *His divine power has given us everything for life and godliness...* (**2 Peter 1:3**)

Gideon wasn't born into the best of families i.e. his Dad, Joash was a leading figure in the worship of **Baal** – a Canaanite god they called father and **Asherah** – a Canaanite goddess of fortune and happiness. However, Gideon was still chosen by the LORD, even calling him a "mighty warrior" while he was hiding from the Midianites in a hole in the ground, a winepress, threshing wheat.

Like many of us, Gideon had real doubts and fears about his purpose in life. He needed lots of encouragement, prompting and direction from the Lord, to accomplish what God asked of him.

When he finally obeyed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he was empowered to bring the children of Israel back to *Jehovah Jireh* – the LORD who provides.

But meanwhile, Israel was suffering oppression at the hands of its enemies; *Jehovah* withheld His blessing, until they repented and returned to worship Him alone; they lost their peace, protection and provision until they returned in repentance.

#### The Pattern of worship in Judges:

**Judges 6:1** *Yet again the People of Israel went back to doing evil in God's sight.*

This is the pattern of how the children of Israel lived throughout the book of Judges, if not throughout the whole Old Testament.

When God's appointed Judge died, Israel returned to worshipping idols but in His great love for them He took measures to bring them home. When life got so bad they would cry out to the Lord to save them, for they had lost everything; this time for 7 years.

Each time the LORD would raise up a Judge to save them but again the cycle would repeat itself, as they forget all His benefits and drifted back into idol worship; they would lose their peace, protection and provision.

1. What about you and me, do we ever lose our peace, protection and provision?
2. Are we putting our relationship with the Lord above all?
3. Is He Lord, God, King and Saviour in every area of our life?

The Lord commands His children to put Him in first place in our lives. *Dear children keep yourself from idols. (1 John 5:21)*

Jesus said: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matthew 22:36-38)*

Because of the Lord's great love, He wants to save us from the futile and fruitless life of putting something or someone above Him. He desires perfect peace to remain between us and as we seek first His kingdom and righteousness, He will provide those things He knows we need – not necessarily the things we want but the truthful order is to first seek the kingdom of God and live righteously, then all the stuff He knows we need will follow on!

#### **The Consequence of their pattern of worship:**

**Judges 6:6** *The People of Israel, reduced to grinding poverty by Midian, cried out to God for help.*

They lost everything they had worked hard for and I fear, ran away to hide in caves, dens and strongholds. They had no freedom to live, work and enjoy the land the Lord had given to them; so a just God in His mercy had to intervene.

The love Father God has for His children is also displayed in His discipline (it's often called tough love)

**Hebrews 12** (citing **Proverbs 3:11-12**)

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*

#### **Breaking their pattern of worship:**

**Judges 6:8** *...the People of Israel cried out to God because of Midian, God sent them a prophet with this message:*

*"God, the God of Israel, says,*

*I delivered you from Egypt, I freed you from a life of slavery;  
I rescued you from Egypt's brutality and then from every oppressor; I pushed them out of your way and gave you their land. "And I said to you, 'I am God, your God. Don't for a minute be afraid of the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.' But you didn't listen to me."*

Through loss, Israel cried out - we often do the same. However, the Lord is looking at our hearts to see if the cry is out of material need or if there is a deep, godly sorrow at our unfaithfulness in deserting Him?

**II Corinthians 7:10** *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

The challenge is not that we don't hear the word of the Lord but we stop listening to Him and moreover trusting and obeying it. We forget all He has done for us and our hearts can become calloused. Through disobedience we lose the perfect peace He promises; protection from our enemies and His gracious provision.

The Lord sent Gideon a prophet with a message.

#### **Challenge to us all this week:**

We too have received the greatest message from God i.e. the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The message God sent to Israel was to remember, repent and return; the Lord is saying the same today!

REMEMBER what the Lord has done to save us.  
REPENT from putting anything or anyone above our relationship with Him  
RETURN to the Lord and receive forgiveness of sins.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)*

AMEN