

fearLESS
a study of Gideon

M. LANE

QUOTE:

“We fear man so much because we fear God so little.”

William Gurnall

1616 - 1679

English Author / Anglican Clergy

QUESTION:

Is that statement applicable to us individually? Is it applicable to us as a congregation?

Gal. 6:4a *“Let each man examine himself.”*

1 Jn. 3:21 *“But if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”*

OUTLINE of JUDGES 6:1-16

- a) Israel’s apostasy brings them into servitude (1)
- b) The details of Israel’s servitude to Midian (2-6)
- c) The Lord sends a prophet (7-10)
- d) An angel appears to Gideon (11-13)
- e) Gideon’s call (14-16)

TEXT of the LESSON: *Judges 7*

OUTLINE of JUDGES 7:1-25

- a) The First Reduction (2-3)
 - b) The Second Reduction (4-8)
 - c) The Reinforcement (9-14)
 - d) The Recognition (15-18)
 - e) The Retreat (19-25)
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THE BACKGROUND

- A. Chapter six is what sets the stage for chapter seven and what is about to happen. In an effort to save some time, we can summarize the problem Israel is having by just looking at two verses:
1. **Jdgs. 6:1a** *“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD.”*
 2. **Jdgs. 6:10b** *“You have not obeyed my voice.”*
- B. We have a nation of people who are in a period of great upheaval. It is a cycle of disobedience, repentance, and deliverance.
1. 1st Apostasy - conquered by Mesopotamia; delivered through Othniel (3:1-11)
 2. 2nd Apostasy - conquered by Moabites and Philistines; delivered through Ehud and Shamgar (3:12-31)
 3. 3rd Apostasy - conquered by Jabin (king of Canaan); delivered through Deborah and Barak (4:1-5:31)
 4. 4th Apostasy - conquered by Midian; delivered through Gideon (6:1-8:32). **This, in part, is what we will be examining.**
- C. *“For they (Midianites) came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers (KJV) (locusts, ESV) for multitude” (Jdgs. 6:5a)*
1. This was not only because of their number but because they consumed everything and left it all destroyed.
 2. It is so bad for the people that Gideon asks: *“Why has all of this happened to us? Where are the miracles that our fathers told us about?” (Jdgs. 6:13)*
- D. God commands Gideon (**Jdgs. 6:14**) to *“Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”*
1. Gideon and the people of Israel are going to go into battle understanding the sovereignty of God.
- E. In order for us to move forward as fearless Christians, we have to understand that as well. We must recognize that God is the creator and sustainer of all things and that we must more fearful of Him than we are any man.
1. *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him who can destroy both the body and soul in Hell” (Mt. 10:28)*

THE FIRST REDUCTION

“And the LORD said to Gideon, ‘The people that are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, ‘My own hands have saved me.’ 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 twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”

Jdgs. 7:2-3

I THE FIRST REDUCTION EXAMINED

A PREPARING FOR WAR

- 1 Imagine for a moment that you are Gideon.
 - i The LORD has sent you to deliver the people.
 - ii Looking around you see 32,000 troops standing shoulder to shoulder.
 - a Would you not be a little less fearful?
 - b Would you not say to yourself, “Surely, victory is mine!”
 - iii When we consider our faith, we can see the same thing.
 - a It is easy for us to be a Christian when others are around.
 - b It is easy for us, even if we might not be feeling it, to stand our ground and sing out, “Victory in Jesus!” Look at what happened to Gideon’s army though.

B THE FEARFUL ARE CULLED

- 1 In the first reduction, 22,000 pick up and leave,
 - i Fear has a domino effect.
 - ii If you have ever studied or looked at great battles, it is typical to see that, if one person turns and runs away, others will follow.
 - a Given enough time, you may be standing there by yourself.
- 2 God does give a reason for having these soldiers leave.
 - i *“The people that are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, ‘My own hands have saved me.’” (Jdgs. 7:2)*
 - a How many times have we, in our arrogance overcome a trial...a temptation...an addiction...and never thought of giving God the glory?
- 3 Just as He did with Gideon, God spends time in removing those things from our lives that are going to cause us to stumble.
 - i He is taking things out that distract us from acknowledging that He is the true authority.
 - ii Not everything is removed.
 - a We still need to be tested.
 - b We still need to be proven.
 - c We still need to be battle ready.

C THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FEAR

- 1 Fear demonstrates a lack of trust and the first thing God did was take away the people who did not trust Him.
 - i Could you imagine if the LORD stood before us, gave the Great Commission, and then said, “But, before you go, if you are afraid, I want you to leave.”
 - a How many of us would hit the back door running?
 - b How many would not only run, but still expect to hear, “*Well done thou good and faithful servant!*” (Mt. 25:21)
 - ii Or, would we be like Gideon who, back in chapter six, recognized that God had given sign after sign after sign and now says, “*I know that you are sovereign! I know that you are in control!*”

THE SECOND REDUCTION

“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. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. 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. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.”

Jdgs. 7:4-8

I THE SECOND REDUCTION EXAMINED

A GOD’S REQUIREMENTS FOR GIDEON

- 1 Gideon’s army is now just 10,000 men. Men who are unafraid. Men who are ready to die for the freedom of Israel.
 - i See the two types of people involved in the second reduction:
 - a Some brought the water to their mouths.
 - b Some knelt down and licked at the water like an animal.
 - ii Why would those who got on their knees and lapped at the water be removed?
 - a Illustration: deer at a stream.
 - 01 Notice how the animal does not have a care in the world.
 - 02 It is not paying attention to its surroundings.
 - 03 It has no focus.
 - b How might that look for a person?
 - 01 They are not focused on their leadership.
 - 02 They have no way to see which way he desires for them to go.

03 A person not focused on the leadership can not only lead others astray but can get those others killed.

B GOD'S REQUIREMENTS FOR A CHRISTIAN

- 1 As Christians, we have to pay attention to our surroundings (e.g., our homes, our places of worship, our brethren, etc.).
 - i We need to be aware of who we are and what we are doing.
 - a *“Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; then turn your foot away from evil” (Pro. 4:25-27).*
 - b *“This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before (‘straining for what lies ahead’, ESV)” (Phil. 3:13).*
 - ii We need to focus on our leadership: Christ...follow Him and everything else falls into place.

THE REINFORCEMENT

“And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine 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.

And 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. 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.”

Jdgs. 7:9-14

I THE REINFORCEMENT EXAMINED

A THE FEAR OF GIDEON

- 1 We are still imagining ourselves as Gideon and things have changed since you first arrived.
 - i No longer do you see 32,000 men.
 - ii You do not even see the 10,000 that were left after the first reduction.
 - a You now only have 300.
 - iii At this point you are probably beginning to show some fear yourself and wishing that you either had not been called by God or that you left with the first 22,000.

B GOD'S ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GIDEON

- 1 Gideon is afraid which is understandable. Let us read verses 13 and 14 again:
 - i *“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” (Jdgs. 7:13-14)

- 2 Not only has your army been reduced, but the enemy knows that you are coming.

C GOD’S ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CHRISTIAN

- 1 As Christians, we need encouragement.
 - i “Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another” (1 Thess. 5:11).
 - ii “Exhort (encourage) one another daily, while it is called today” (Heb. 3:13).
- 2 We see that very thing here – God encourages them.
 - i He encourages their faith.
 - ii If we do not encourage the faith of each other...if we do not encourage the faith of the leadership...then the congregation does not go anywhere.
- 3 God reinforced:
 - i Their faith
 - ii Their Hope
 - iii Their trust
- 4 If you have *faith* in God...if you have *hope* in Christ...If you have *trust* in His word and those who are shepherds over you...then you are ensured a *victory*.

THE RECOGNITION

“And it was so, 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 hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. 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. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.”
Jdgs. 7:15-18

I THE RECOGNITION EXAMINED

A WHAT ISRAEL RECOGNIZED

- 1 In the face of impending war, Gideon is going to make sure that his life is right before going into battle.
 - i After two reductions notice what Gideon did: he worshipped.
 - ii He did not wait for victory because he knew that victory was already assured.
- 2 We are also, if you will remember, in the fourth occurrence of Israelite apostasy.
 - i Some of the military could have been of the opinion that, because of all they had done before, God would continue to forsake them; and that may be a reason for their fear.
- 3 Yet, what did the LORD tell Gideon back in chapter six?

- i “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?” (Jdgs. 6:14).

B WHAT WE ARE TO RECOGNIZE

1 God has charged us to go to war:

- i “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:12-13).
- ii Illustration: "In the second film of The Lord of the Rings trilogy - The Two Towers - there is a king who is reluctant to go to war. Théoden...is fearful and timid. An army is marching through his lands, an army bred for a single purpose: to destroy the world of men. Villages fall; women and children are slain. Still Théoden balks: "I will not risk open war." To which Aragorn replies, "Open war is upon you whether you would risk it or not."
 - a Friends, we are in the midst of a war that has already been won through the death of Christ on the cross. However, we are still called to stand at the ready and defend the cause of Christ.

THE RETREAT

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.”

Jdgs. 7:19-25

I THE RETREAT EXAMINED

A THE TACTICS AND RESULT OF GIDEON’S CHARGE

- 1 The approach of Gideon causes such confusion that the Midianites had already begun to kill each other before a single Israelite had even raised a sword.
 - i Gideon, however, is going to see things through to the end.

- ii It is not enough for the Midianites to just flee from the immediate vicinity, Israel wanted them purged from the entire region...gone from their borders to such an extent that there was no possibility of their return.
 - a When they were led by the LORD into victory, their pursuit did not stop.
- 2 Let us re-read verse 24.
 - i *“And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan” (Jdgs. 7:24)*
 - a The people came to help!

B THE RESULT OF A CHRISTIAN CHARGE

- 1 A comparison can easily be made here of the church today and what we are doing right and what we could be doing better.
 - i When we see error in the church, it should not be tolerated on any level.
 - ii We should chase it to such a distance and to such destruction that there is no place for it to take root nor retaliation to be a factor.
- 2 Notice also though the support.
 - i Gideon called the other tribes and they came to support their godly efforts.
 - a How often do we see, in the church, that a sound congregation is having a Gospel Meeting or a Lectureship and we do not attend?
 - b That is something that, on a large scale, could be doing better.

CONCLUSION:

- A. How was Gideon able to accomplish all of this?
 - a *“Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.”*