

- ***READ Judges 2:11-23*** At the end of Moses's life, he earnestly pleaded with the nation of Israel that they would remember and respect the covenant they had with God so that they might enjoy the great blessings He desired to give to them. But he also admonished them to remember that their failure to remember and respect the covenant would only lead to their demise. We would hope that Moses's words would resonate and remain with the people, but **Judges 2:10** sadly informs us that Israel failed in this regard. Following the death of Moses's successor Joshua, *"That whole generation (Joshua's generation) was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works he had done for Israel."*
- It only took one generation past Joshua for the people of Israel to forget about God and begin their descent into the wretched cycle that is described for us in **Judges 2:11-23**. The same pattern of behavior is seen throughout nearly the entire rest of the book of Judges.
 - Israel Rebels Against God
 - Surrounding Nations Oppress Them
 - The People Cry Out To God For Help
 - God Hears His People & Delivers Them Through A Judge
 - The People Are Good Until The Judge Dies & The Cycle Begins Again
- God had commanded for the Israelites to drive out the Canaanite nations, but their failure to do so provided the perfect opportunity for God to use them as tools to carry out the punishment made due through their disobedience and rebellion. As soon as the people did what was evil in the Lord's sight, he would turn them over to a surrounding nation for their punishment. After a period of time, the people would regret their disobedience, turn back to God, and God would raise of the judge to deliver the people and lead them for a time. The first four chapters of this cycle feature a great stretch of strong judges who very capably took care of God's people when He so desired.
 - Othniel defeats King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram. (3:7-11)
 - Ehud defeats King Eglon of Moab. (3:12-30)
 - Shamgar defeats 600 Philistines. (3:31)
 - Deborah & Barak defeat King Jabin & the Canaanite army of Sisera. (4 & 5)
- Each of these judges achieved great victories over the enemies of God's people who were oppressing them. Unfortunately following the deaths of Deborah and Barak, the people continued in their cycle of rebellion, and God this time used the Midianites to oppress the people for their rebellion. The Midianites, Amalekites, and Qenizites ravaged the resources of Israel to the point where they were poverty-stricken which caused them to finally call out to the Lord. The Lord sends a prophet to rebuke the people for their disobedience to God, and we would expect for God to then turn around and send another great and mighty warrior judge to deliver the people.
- However...the cycle is broken in a sense because the next person to step up and deliver Israel is anything but a great when we are introduced to him. In fact, I refer to the fifth judge of Israel as the not so great Gideon the son of Joash the Abiezrite because he is seen to be exactly that by how the Scriptures speak of this man. However, this does not mean that Israel is doomed because though Gideon might not be all that great...the God of Israel is, and I believe there are some great lessons we can learn from this story within the history of Israel. **Judges 6:11-7:23** is our text, and these first few verses give us a very clear glimpse into Gideon's weaknesses.

I. Gideon Shows Weakness

A. Weak in hope. (6:12,13)

1. We are first introduced to Gideon as he is hiding out in his winepress threshing wheat so that the Midianites wouldn't come take the wheat. It is in this place that the angel of the Lord comes to him and greets him with the words, ***"The Lord is with you, valiant warrior"*** which we will come to see as most certainly foreshadowing and not speaking to the current state of Gideon. Gideon questions what he hears by stating that it certainly doesn't seem as if the Lord is with him since all of the bad things are happening to him and his fellow Israelites.
2. He offers words which surely indicate that he is not at all hopeful for better days ahead since he has not seen any of the great works of the Lord that had been spoken of by his fathers. They had spoken of God's mighty power in bringing them out of the land of Egypt by way of great signs, but Gideon sure seems to be without hope that such things would happen again given the current situation within Israel. Gideon certainly wasn't optimistic.

B. Weak in status. (6:14,15)

1. As the conversation progresses, Gideon is told by the angel that he would go forth with the strength he possessed and be the one who would deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Out of all of Israel, Gideon would be her deliverer.
2. Instead of feeling honor to serve in such a position, we only see Gideon again doubt, and this time he doubts by stating that his family is of no significance at all. ***"Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's family."*** Gideon is less than convinced that he can be the one to fulfill this position for God as deliverer.

C. Weak in courage. (6:16-24, 25-27, 28-32)

1. **(16-24)** From here, we see Gideon trying to gain a sign from the angel as to whether or not he had truly found favor in his sight. He goes to retrieve a gift that would usually be reserved as an offering for God, and the angel causes the offering of meat, bread, and broth to be burned up from the rock that he touches with his staff. This causes Gideon to become terrified as he seems to believe that he has now seen God and surely will die. **(Exodus 33:20)**
2. **(25-27)** Instead, the Lord seeks to give him confidence and courage by telling him, ***"Peace to you. Don't be afraid, for you will not die."*** The Lord then goes on to tell Gideon that he first needed to address the unfaithfulness in his own house by tearing down the Baal altar and Asherah pole that belonged to his father. He was then to build a proper altar and offer a sacrifice to God. Gideon is willing to do so, but his lack of courage is seen in the fact that he does so at night with the help of ten of his families servants.
3. **(28-32)** In the morning, the men of the city come to see what has taken place and they find out Gideon is responsible. Instead of going out to meet these men believing that God was with him...Gideon is instead seemingly hiding from these guys since they have to tell his dad to bring him out to face them. In this instance, Joash saves his son by telling the people to simply rely upon their gods to exact the proper revenge. Gideon simply isn't shown to be a man from which courage is overflowing.

D. Weak in faith. (7:1-11)

1. Finally, we see that Gideon is also a man who is weak in his faith by not being willing to trust fully in God's power. There is the well known story of how God cuts down Gideon's army to a mere 300 men who would go up and fight against the Midianites, Amalekites, & Qedemites.
2. God tells Gideon that it is time to go attack the enemies' camp because He had handed them over to him, but he gives Gideon an out that he takes because he simply seems to still be afraid and not trusting in God. His faith still isn't where it needs to be. **(7:9-11)**

From everything we have seen up to this point...Gideon truly isn't all that impressive, and we might be left thinking that there is no way that this man could be the man that delivers the Israelites out of the hands of their oppressors. If we were looking simply at the strength of this man then we would most certainly be correct. However, we have to look at the other main character of this story...God. What we want to notice next is the fact that God begins by implying the power that He possesses to strength Gideon, and then He will plainly show the power that He possesses to accomplish His will.

II. God Implies His Power

A. *"The Lord is with you, valiant warrior."* (6:12)

1. We noted that the addressing of Gideon as *"valiant warrior"* was surely a more appropriate address for who Gideon would be in the future and not who he was in the moment as he was hiding in the winepress threshing his wheat. And yet, who was it that addressed Gideon as such? Was it not the angel of the Lord who was bringing God's message to Gideon? What must be the point of this message with such a term addressed to this clearly scared man?
2. The point was surely to establish within Gideon's mind that He had all of the power in the universe behind him because God was going to be with him in what He was telling him needed to be done. Gideon didn't need to worry about his weakness because the power of God was going to be with him.

B. *"Go...I am sending you!"* (6:14)

1. This is further seen in **v.14** when the Bible says, *"The Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!'"*
2. Though Gideon might not have seen himself as having much strength at the moment, he should have recognize that wherever he went...the Lord was going to be with him because He was sending him. He wasn't going by himself, but he was going with God.

C. *"But I will be with you..."* (6:16)

1. And in case Gideon still didn't get what the Lord was trying to tell him...God implies His great power one more time in **v.16** when he says, *"'But I will be with you,' the lord said to him, 'You will strike Midian down as if it were one man.'"*
2. It is interesting to me that Gideon begins this conversation with the angel of the Lord by bemoaning the fact that he had not been seeing the great power of God that had been spoken of by the forefathers of Israel. This is somewhat comical because the rest of the time God is continually trying to imply that He wants to show Gideon this power if he would simply go as the angel was commanding him to do. But God will soon stop with the implications and straight up show Gideon the great power He possesses to accomplish His will.

III. God Proves His Power

A. *"The Spirit of the Lord enveloped Gideon..."* (6:33-35)

1. The enemies of the Lord have gather together, crossed the Jordan River, and are now camped in the Jezreel Valley. The Lord sends His spirit to envelope Gideon so that he blows the ram's horn as a signal for his own people to rally around him.
2. This show of newfound courage causes his messengers to go throughout the land, and men are actually willing to rally behind this man. A great number are ready to join in this fight with Gideon, but it didn't happen until the Lord's Spirit was upon him in full strength.

B. *"I will deliver you with the three hundred men..."* (7:1-23)

1. From the numbers given in this text, around 32,000 men were gathered to go up and fight against the enemies of God's people, and yet it is the Lord who says they have too many. He wants the people to recognize that He is the source of their victory, so he tells Gideon to tell the army that all who are fearful and trembling can go home. 22,000 leave at these words.

2. Then the Lord again states that there are too many, so he does this strange water drinking test where some would kneel down to drink and others would use their hands to bring the water up to their faces...which narrowed down the number to a mere 300. It is with these 300 that the Lord was able to have the victory over the enemies of Israel.
3. In is in **v.15** when we finally see Gideon's moment of strength, but the strength is truly that of God who hands the Midianites, Amalekites, and Qedemites into his hands by confusing the enemy through blowing of horns and smashing of pots. They pursued the Midianites to their fullest defeat, and the power of God was surely to be thanked for the victory. Not only did Gideon learn about the power of God, but his story also teaches us some important lessons.

IV. Our Lessons (I Corinthians 1:26-31)

A. We are people God can use.

1. At first glance, Gideon does not at all seem like a person who can be used by God to accomplish great things. He was weak in hope, status, courage, and faith, and yet God was able to even use him to accomplish a great victory in His name. Friends, if God can use someone like Gideon to accomplish great things then He most certainly can use us regardless of what we might perceive to be our weaknesses.
2. This is especially true when we get into the New Testament and consider what Paul writes to the Corinthians concerning some of the issues they were having in their church in Corinth. There was an atmosphere where prideful and arrogant attitudes were present and people were trying to promote themselves based upon who baptized or taught them. Paul seeks to destroy these attitudes by reminding them they a) they truly weren't anything special and b) God uses the unimpressive for a purpose.
3. This purpose is to show that anyone can be used by Him to accomplish great things for His purposes. This was true with the not so great Gideon and it is true for the not so great us! Surely I'm not the only one in his auditorium who has ever felt inadequate when it comes to the thought of God using me for His will. There have been times when I myself have been weak in one way or another, but when I think about Gideon and what God did with him...I am reminded that God can even use me, but that is predicated on whether or not I am willing to rely upon His strength and give Him glory for the victories I experience.

B. God is our strength and victory.

1. That is the second point we want to take away from all of this. We must never forget that our strength and victories are only made possible by what God provides for us. This is seen in the story of Gideon when God pauses before sending them into battle and tells Gideon, *"You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'My own strength saved me.'"* (**Judges 7:2**)
2. We must be ever aware of the temptation to being prideful and arrogant and think that anything we do is because we are great, mighty, or strong. Speaking for myself and allowing you to state the same thing to yourself if applicable...I am not wise, powerful, or of noble birth. I am surely despised and insignificant in this world. I am nothing. But when it comes to who I am in Christ by His power...then I am loved, valued, and something truly incredible.

My friends, you may be here this morning and thinking that you're just not strong enough. You may see yourself as weak in hope, status, courage, or faith. Or it could be that you find yourself weak in some combination or all the above. If that is you then please consider the man Gideon! Consider how he was nothing and God made him something great! But please do also remember that all glory and praise belongs to God alone for what he does for you and uses you for in this life. May we all remember the words of Paul in **I Corinthians 1:31**, *"Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*