

September 6

Scriptures: Read Judges 6

Key Verse: “But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him.” (Judges 6:34)

Overview

Once again, the same typical cycle of sin, punishment, and deliverance is repeated. It is amazing to see how patient, long-suffering, merciful, and gracious our Lord is. He loved His people and, though He did not like to see them suffering at the hands of oppressors, He allowed it to chastise them so they might turn from their wickedness back to Him.

The oppression under the Medianites (descendants of Abraham through Keturah, Gen. 25:2), the Amalekites, who always took pleasure in joining forces against Israel (3:13), and the desert people of the East was the worst yet. Israel was impoverished, and many had fled from their homes to hide in caves from fear of the nomadic desert people who would sweep into Canaan in great numbers with all their livestock, consuming or destroying all the produce of the land.

After suffering under these severe conditions for seven years, Israel finally cried out to the Lord. An unnamed prophet was sent to rebuke Israel for forgetting the Lord. In saying they had not obeyed His voice, He was in effect telling them they did not deserve to be delivered; yet, at that very time, God, in His mercy, was preparing Gideon to be their next judge and deliverer. The message of the prophet would have served to bring conviction and prepare the people for Gideon’s coming.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he was hiding his wheat in the winepress so the enemy would not seize it. He was not lazy like others who were having a nap in the heat of the day; rather he was actively dividing ways to provide for his family. The Angel sent from God to commission Gideon must have been an appearance of our Lord Himself. It seems Gideon was bitter, believing God had forsaken His people. He was honest, not hiding his skepticism and feelings, and God honors those who express themselves openly and truthfully without any hypocrisy.

Gideon’s response to the call of God was similar to that of Moses who tried to make excuses and expressed his unworthiness (v.15; Ex.3:11). The Lord always uses those who are humble and lowly, not the proud and mighty. Gideon asked for a sign, and the Lord caused fire to consume His peace offering. Then Gideon knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that it was indeed the Angel of the Lord whom he had seen face to face (v.22). He experienced peace with God, thus naming the site “Jehovah Shalom” (v.24).

Gideon’s first task was to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and build one to the Lord in the prescribed manner. There he sacrificed a burnt offering, expressing his dedication to God. Probably this was the communal place of false worship, since the whole community was enraged and wanted Gideon’s death. This incident shows how terribly Israel had sunken into idolatry: They were willing to kill one of their own clansmen for the sake of Baal. Gideon’s father, Josh, was probably a priest of Baal, yet it seems he was convicted and challenged by Gideon’s act of

bravery and came to his defense. The real implications of Joash's words were, "If Baal cannot save himself, how do you expect to save him? If he is a god let him plead for himself" (v.31). Joash's defense was successful, for we later read that Gideon's fellow villagers of Abiezrite in south Manasseh rallied behind him when he, by the power of the Holy Spirit, stood courageously and blew the ram's horn (v.34).

Gideon still needed more confidence and further confirmation by a sign from the Lord to know without a doubt that he was to be the deliverer. The sign from the fleece of wool made it clear and encouraged him to fully trust God's promise. God was gracious in answering Gideon, but He does not always honor such requests from His children. He knows the motivation of the heart and wants us to believe wholly in Him and act in faith.

Prayer

Lord, as You did with Gideon, You also see the potential within us. Help us to recognize that, in Your eyes, we are potentially mighty people of faith and valor, stepping out to boldly serve You. Grant us the grace to be that kind of person.