

CONCISE NOTES ON  
THE LIFE OF GIDEON

JUDGES 6, 7, 8

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Victory-Gideon-over-Midianites  
Nicolas Poussin



## JUDGES 6

**The Making of a General by God**  
**Judges 6:1-**

### **The Midianite Invaders**

**1** And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

6:1. And the children of Israel did evil.

### **A Cycle in Israel's History**

- Divine deliverance
- Apostasy
- Judgment
- Repentance
- Restoration

**2** And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.

6:2. made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves. One of the myths of evolution is that of cavemen being a subhuman and evolving people. The truth is that men have dwelt in caves since the beginning of time, to the present hour, for one reason or another. Primitive living does not mean primitive people. The Hebrew people, though compelled to dwell in caves, were a sophisticated and agricultural society.

### **Two Enemies United** **The Midianites and the Amalekites**

**3** And *so* it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

### **A Scorched Earth Policy**

**4** And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

**5** For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

**6** And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

6:6. cried unto the LORD. Finally, after seven years of domination by the Midianites, the people of Israel cried unto the LORD.

“How long has it been  
since you talked with the Lord  
And told him your heart's hidden secrets?  
How long since you prayed,  
how long since you stayed  
On your knees till the light shone through?

How long has it been,  
since your mind felt at ease?  
How long since your heart knew no burden?

Can you call him your Friend?  
How long has it been,  
since you knew that he cared for you?

How long has it been,  
since you knelt by your bed  
and prayed to the Lord up in heaven?  
How long since you knew  
That He'd answer you  
And would keep you the long night through

How long has it been since you woke with the dawn  
and felt this day is worth living  
Can you call him your Friend?

How long has it been  
since you knew that he cared for you?”

### **The Prophet of God and a Message of Remembrance**

**7 ¶** And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,

**8** That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

**9** And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land;

**10** And I said unto you, I *am* the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

6:10. Ye have not obeyed my voice. The Israelites had not obeyed the voice of the LORD in many areas of life. They had not fully conquered the land as the Lord had instructed them to do (Judges 1:1-36). They had not kept themselves separate, and entered into mixed marriages. The Israelites embraced false gods and engaged in acts of idolatry. Idolatry led to apostasy. Apostasy led to divine discipline because the people did not repent of these sins despite the convicting message of the prophet whom the LORD sent (v. 8-10).

### God's Call to Gideon

**11 ¶**And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites.

6:11. And there came an angel of the LORD. The Angel of the Lord is a reference to the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ, the revealed person of the triune God (v. 22).

### The Call of God

• God called Abraham	Genesis 22:11
• God called Moses	Exodus 19:3
• God called Gideon	Judges 6:12
• God called Samuel	1 Samuel 3:4
• God called Israel	Jeremiah 11:16
• God called Christ	Matthew 2:15
• God called Saul of Tarsus	Galatians 1:5

**12** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

6:12. thou mighty man of valour. By referring to Gideon as a “mighty man of valour”, the Angel of the LORD may have been exercising divine humor, for Gideon is anything but a courageous person at this point. The text says that he was hiding from the Midianites. But it may also be that the Angel of the LORD referred to Gideon as to what he was going to be. Because the LORD knows our end as well as our beginning, He knew what Gideon would become. In the New Testament, individuals are addressed as “saints” despite being weak in the flesh. *Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**13** And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? But now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

6:13. And Gideon said unto him.

### **Three Inquiring Questions**

- Why has trouble fallen upon the people of God?
- Where are the miracles associated with the Exodus Generation?
- Did not the LORD deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt?

### **A Wrong Conclusion**

6:13. It is possible to ask the right questions, but to come to an incomplete and therefore wrong conclusion. Gideon asked three penetrating questions, but he came to a wrong conclusion. He said, “*But now the LORD hath forsaken us.*”

**14** And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?

6:14. And the LORD looked upon him. When the LORD looked upon Gideon, what did He see?

### **Gideon’s Characteristics**

- Gideon (hewer), was a spiritual man, in that he was interested in spiritual things. As Esau was a man of the flesh, and Jacob was a man of the spirit, so Gideon had a heart which beat for God (v. 13). The person who is spiritually minded is the person with whom the Lord can work mighty things.
- Gideon was a humble man reflected by his words (v. 15).

- Gideon was a cautious man, demanding a sign from the Lord (v. 17).
- Gideon was a weak man in the swamp of doubt, but became a transformed man by the power and grace of God (Hebrews 11:32).

**15** And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.

6:15. I *am* the least. I *am* the youngest.

**16** And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

6:16. Surely I will be with thee. An assurance of God's love, and a firm confidence in the Lord's promise will strengthen and comfort the heart.

Fear not Isaac, "*for I am with thee*".

Genesis 26:24

Fear not Jacob, "*for I am with thee*".

Genesis 28:15

Fear not Israel, "*for I am with thee*."

Isaiah 41:10

Jeremiah, do not be afraid, "*for I am with thee*".

Jeremiah 1:8

Paul, preach the gospel in Corinth, "*for I am with thee*".

Acts 18:10

Gideon, "*I will be with thee*".

Judges 6:16

Christian, do not fear for the Lord has promised to be with us, and never to leave us alone.

"I've seen the lightning flashing, I've heard the thunder roll.

I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which almost conquered my soul.

I've heard the voice of my Savior, bidding me still to fight on.

He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

No, never alone, no never alone,

He promised never to leave me,

He'll claim me for His own;

No, never alone, no never alone.

He promised never to leave me,

Never to leave me alone.

The world's fierce winds are blowing, temptation sharp and keen.

I have a peace in knowing my Savior stands between—

He stands to shield me from danger when my friends are all gone.

He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!

When in affliction's valley I tread the road of care,  
My Savior helps me carry the cross so heavy to bear;  
Though all around me is darkness, earthly joys all flown;  
My Savior whispers His promise, never to leave me alone!

He died on Calvary's mountain, for me they piercèd His side.  
For me He opened that fountain, the crimson, cleansing tide.  
For me He waiteth in glory, seated upon His throne.  
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!"

Ludie D. Pickett, 1897

### Seeking a Sign

**17** And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.

6:17. shew me a sign. When faith is strong, no sign is needed once the Lord has spoken. Jesus was not happy with the seekers of signs and said, *Matthew 12:39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:* The church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be careful not to become enamored with seeking signs to validate the Christian experience. In the area of prophecy the seeking of signs should be avoided. Modern day teachers and prophets that encourage God's people to seek signs are false teachers and false prophets and are to be condemned.

### A Desire to Dine with the Lord

**18** Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

**19 ¶**And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

**20** And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

**21 ¶**Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

### Come and Dine

“Jesus has a table spread  
Where the saints of God are fed,  
He invites His chosen people, “Come and dine”;  
With His manna He doth feed  
And supplies our every need:  
O ’tis sweet to sup with Jesus all the time!

“Come and dine,” the Master calleth, “Come and dine”;  
You may feast at Jesus’ table all the time;  
He Who fed the multitude, turned the water into wine,  
To the hungry calleth now, “Come and dine.”

The disciples came to land,  
Thus obeying Christ’s command,  
For the Master called unto them, “Come and dine”;  
There they found their heart’s desire,  
Bread and fish upon the fire;  
Thus He satisfies the hungry every time.

Soon the Lamb will take His bride  
To be ever at His side,  
All the host of Heaven will assembled be;  
O ’twill be a glorious sight,  
All the saints in spotless white;  
And with Jesus they will feast eternally.”

Charles B. Widmeyer, 1906

**22** And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! For because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

6:22. I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. There is a personal dimension to the believer’s fellowship with the Lord, which is why Christianity is more than a religion. Christianity is based on a personal relationship with the living Lord. Faith is believing in the One who is real, but now unseen. The reward of that faith will be to see that which has been believed. One day, every Christian will see Christ face to face.

“Face to face with Christ, my Savior,  
Face to face—what will it be,  
When with rapture I behold Him,  
Jesus Christ Who died for me?

Face to face I shall behold Him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face in all His glory,  
I shall see Him by and by!

Only faintly now I see Him,  
With the darkened veil between,  
But a blessèd day is coming,  
When His glory shall be seen.

What rejoicing in His presence,  
When are banished grief and pain;  
When the crooked ways are straightened,  
And the dark things shall be plain.

Face to face—oh, blissful moment!  
Face to face—to see and know;  
Face to face with my Redeemer,  
Jesus Christ Who loves me so.”

Carrie E. Breck, 1898

***Special Note.***

Every person who will be useful in the work of the Lord must have a personal relationship with the Lord. Oh Christian, seek the face of God until the experience of the grace of God grips you. Everything will be different from that point on.

**23** And the LORD said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

6:23. thou shalt not die. When Gideon cried out in alarm, “*Alas!*” it was because he knew the LORD had told Moses, “*Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live*” (Exodus 33:20). The reason why Gideon would not die is because he saw a theophany, a manifestation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, who is the revealed member of the Godhead. *Colossians 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

**24** Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

**Destruction of the Idol of Baal**

**25 ¶** And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it:

6:25. and cut down the grove that *is* by it. Literally, “and cut down the Asherah that is by it.” The reference is to an image of a Phoenician goddess.

**26** And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

6:26. Offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove. The LORD was not sensitive to the religion of the Midianites. He did not respect their religion nor allow it to compete with Him. Gideon was instructed to take the wood of the grove, destroy it, and use the wood in a new altar to Himself. There is a principle to be learned. Truth is exclusive. God will tolerate no rivals.

**27** Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

6:27. He did *it* by night. The faith of Gideon was strong enough to obey the will of the LORD, but weak enough so that he “feared”. In his fear, Gideon moved in the night. In time, Gideon would become bolder in the LORD, but he had to grow in grace and knowledge.

***Special Note.***

Christian, what do you fear?

Are you afraid of the future? Listen to the LORD say, “*Fear not...I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Genesis 15:1).

Are you afraid God will forget you? *Luke 12:7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

Are you afraid of not going to heaven? *Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

Church, are you afraid of gospel obedience as Israel was in the days of the Exodus? “*Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation*” (Genesis 46:3).

6:25-27. throw down the altar of Baal. The prophet Nahum reminds us that “God is jealous” (Nahum 1:2). He wants no rivals in the hearts and lives of His own. Commenting on the theme of the Lord’s jealousy, Charles H. Spurgeon notes the following.

“Your Lord is very jealous of your love, O believer. Did he choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did he buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that he would not stop in heaven without you; he would sooner die than you should perish, and he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and himself.

He is very jealous of your trust. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we lean upon him, he is glad, but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom, or the wisdom of a friend-worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, he is displeased, and will chasten us that he may bring us to himself.

He is also very jealous of our company. There should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find sufficient solace in our carnal comforts, to prefer even the society of our fellow Christians to secret intercourse with him, this is grievous to our jealous Lord. He would fain have us abide in him, and enjoy constant fellowship with himself; and many of the trials which he sends us are for the purpose of weaning our hearts from the creature, and fixing them more closely upon himself.

Let this jealousy which would keep us near to Christ be also a comfort to us, for if he loves us so much as to care thus about our love we may be sure that he will suffer nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies. Oh that we may have grace this day to keep our hearts in sacred chastity for our Beloved alone, with sacred jealousy shutting our eyes to all the fascinations of the world!"

### Seeking Fleshly Retribution

**28 ¶**And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

**29** And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

**30** Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

### The Courage and Humor of Joash

**31** And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself, because *one* hath cast down his altar.

6:31. if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself. The faith and actions of Gideon transformed his father Joash, of whom Gideon had been afraid (v. 27). Using some humor, Joash made a wise argument. If Baal is any kind of a god, let him defend himself and punish those who have torn down his altar.

***Special Note.***

There is a wonderful story told about the 16<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Reformer, John Knox, who was deeply opposed to the worship or veneration of Mary. “Having been delivered from “*the puddle of papistry*,” as he called it, he was captured by the French and endured for nineteen months the brutality and confinement as a galley slave. A Scottish commentator said about Knox’s horrendous suffering, “Chained to a floating hell, he began his apprenticeship as an apostle of the liberty of the children of God.” It seems that he was allowed to write at times. On one occasion, he tells us, the Catholic chaplain of Knox’s ship held up a beautifully painted wooden statue of the virgin Mary and encouraged Knox and the other prisoners to genuflect and show proper reference. When the statue was forcibly placed in Knox’s hand for him to kiss it, he grabbed it and immediately threw it overboard into the sea. “*Let our Lady now save herself,*” he said. “*She is light enough; let her learn to swim!*” Never again, Knox adds, was he forced to “*idolatry*” by kissing and bowing to the image of the virgin Mary” (Rev. Johan D. Tangelde).

**32** Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

6:32. he called him Jerubbaal. Encouraged by Gideon’s bold stand against the Midianites by destroying the altar of Baal at Ophrah, his father Joash began to call him Jerub-baal, which means “let Baal plead”.

**In the Valley of Jezreel**

**33 ¶**Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

6:33. in the valley of Jezreel. Located north of the city of Jerusalem, the valley of Jezreel was strategically important. Many of Israel’s battles were fought here.

**34** But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

6:34. the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon. The Hebrew word (labash) translated “*came upon*” conveys the image of being clothed with a garment. The Spirit of the LORD wrapped Himself around Gideon.

***Special Note.***

The Christian has a distinguished spiritual wardrobe to enjoy and wear.

- Put on the armour of light Romans 13:12
- Put on incorruption 1 Corinthians 15:53
- Put on immortality 1 Corinthians 15:53
- Put on Christ Galatians 3:27

• Put on the new man	Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10
• Put on the whole armour of God	Ephesians 6:11
• Put on bowels of mercies, kindness etc.	Colossians 3:12
• Put on charity	Colossians 3:14

**35** And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

### **Laying out the Fleece**

**36 ¶** And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

### **The Dry Ground**

**37** Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; *and* if the dew be on the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *beside*, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

### **A Bowl Full of Water**

**38** And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

### **The Dry Fleece**

**39** And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.

**40** And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

6:36-40. Gideon became creative in his unbelief, but the Lord was so gracious. He honored the faith that undergirded the unusual requests. But oh, may the Lord deliver us from unbelief and allow us to do great exploits on his behalf. Let us tear down any modern day altars to Baal of our own making, and let us worship and serve the Lord, by faith.

## Doctrine of Laying out the Fleece

1. The laying out of a “fleece” before God to discern his will is often taught in the church to be an acceptable guiding practice because the concept is patterned after the example of Gideon.
2. The purpose of Gideon’s fleece is plainly stated. Gideon wanted to know if God was really going to deliver Israel by his hand (v. 36), as He said He would. “*Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man*” (6:16).
3. Matthew Henry, in a spirit of charity, purports that the sense of this request was, “*Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.*”
4. However, the New Testament does emphasize the importance of faith.
  - By faith we are saved. *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*
  - By faith we are to walk. 2 Corinthians 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)
5. The laying out of a “fleece” can lead to much spiritual abuse as silly and unreasonable requests are made, such as the requests made by Gideon. And while God was gracious to Gideon and answered his requests, there is no promise the Lord will continue to honor such requests.
6. The believer is specifically to pray according to the will of God. *1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*
7. A great controversy and division of fellowship occurred between George Whitefield and John Wesley when Wesley insisted on “*laying out the fleece*” on a matter by the casting of lots.

### ***Special Note.***

Specifically, the issue of concern between Whitefield and Wesley was over the doctrine of predestination. A private agreement had been reached not to make a public issue of the matter until further discussion took place. However, in May, 1740, John Wesley violated that agreement and published an attack on this particular doctrine of grace. George Whitefield felt compelled to respond publicly, which he did on December 24, 1740 (A Letter from George Whitefield to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley In Answer to Mr. Wesley’s Sermon Entitled “Free Grace” *Galatians 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*).

## JUDGES 7

**1** Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

**2** And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

**3** 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.

7:3. Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid.

### Military Exemptions

- Those who were afraid Deuteronomy 20:8; Judges 7:3;
- Those who were engaged Deuteronomy 20:7
- Those who were recently married Deuteronomy 24:5
- Those growing a vineyard Deuteronomy 20:6

7:3 twenty and two thousand. This is a large number of fearful people. One of the great problems in the church today is that it has its own “twenty and two thousand” fearful souls. Christians are afraid to oppose false doctrine. Christians are afraid to preach the Word. Popular topics such as money, social justice, love, sex, and marriage are preferred to the doctrines of grace which are glorious but controversial. Christians are afraid to speak out against the evils of Islam. Christians are afraid to share their faith. But God has not given us “*the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7).

**4** 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.

7:4. The people *are* yet *too* many. The emphasis on numbers in the local church is out of proportion to what God emphasizes. The LORD prefers quality over quantity. In the service of the Lord “it is better to have ardor, fervency, and dedication, than to have the weakness of large numbers with neutrality” (S. Lewis Johnson). It is possible to lose numbers and yet gain in strength. Israel went from an army of 32,000 to 300 fearless, dedicated men. They faced an army of 132,000.

7:4. bring them down unto the water. Water is very important. It is essential for physical life, and it represents spiritual life as well. Speaking to the woman at the well of Samaria, Jesus said unto her, *“If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”* (John 4:10). You have had a drink of physical water, but have you drank of the spiritual water? *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:13-14).

7:4. I will try them...whom I say unto thee. Here is the grand doctrine of divine election. Not only does God elect those who shall be the heirs of salvation, He elects those whom He shall use in His service. God will test and God will approve one person over another.

### The Test

**5** 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.

7:5. Every one that lappeth of the water. Those who lapped the water did not waste as much time as those who bowed down upon their knees to drink water (v. 6). A principle is established. It is possible to spend valuable and unnecessary time on necessary things. Drinking water is necessary but should not take up an inordinate amount of time. Nothing should. Christians are to be engaged in “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). There is a certain urgency that should mark the Christian’s life. Time is short, death is certain, eternity is real. One way the Christian can redeem the time is by walking in wisdom toward them that are without the sphere of saving faith (Colossians 4:5). In other words, prayer, Bible study, worship, and witnessing are ways to redeem the time. The believer must not waste time, especially in times of peril. Spiritual eyes must never be taken off the enemy.

“Rise up, O men of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and mind and soul and strength  
To serve the King of kings.

Rise up, O men of God!  
The kingdom tarries long.  
Bring in the day of brotherhood  
And end the night of wrong.

Rise up, O men of God!  
The church for you doth wait,  
Her strength unequal to her task;  
Rise up and make her great!

Lift high the cross of Christ!  
Tread where His feet have trod.  
As brothers of the Son of Man,  
Rise up, O men of God!"

William P. Merrill, 1911

### Characteristics of the Water Test

- It was a secret test.
- It was a sacred test.
- It was a simple test.
- It was a significant test.

**6** 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.

7:6. Ninety seven hundred men got down on their knees, while only three hundred lapped water like a dog. Ninety seven hundred men were sent home, and a spiritual truth is learned. The church can lose in numbers, but grow in quality. There are multitudes of men in Christian pulpits that preach and teach a liberal, and therefore a false gospel. The church would be stronger if it lost such unfaithful ministers. The church has multitudes of parishioners that are not serious about living out the ethics of the Christian life, but they do enjoy the pomp and ceremony of the service, and a sense of comfort and security in a token faith. But if they left the church, it would grow in quality.

Understanding this spiritual truth will help to comprehend why Jesus diffused large crowds that gathered around Him. Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and the people were offended and left Him. Jesus spoke of divine election. He said that "*no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*" (John 6:65-66). Why did Jesus preach in such a way as to discourage people? He did so, in part, because He needed disciples of quality, not quantity.

### Gideon's Three Hundred Warriors God's Mathematics

**7** 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.

7:7. three hundred men. This small band of brothers would face an opposing army of 135,000. Though small in number, Gideon's army of 300 was faithful and not fearful. They were also fervent and would finish the task assigned.

***Special Note.***

There is another small band of warrior brothers known to the world because of a historian named Herodotus who wrote an account of the battle at Thermopylae, the narrow pass in Italy where 300 Spartans and their Greek allies made a last stand against tens of thousands of Xerxes's invading army. Although the Spartans were defeated and annihilated at Thermopylae, the battle played an important part in the Greek resistance to the second, and final, Persian invasion. "Come and take them!", was said to be the response by the Spartans at Thermopylae to the Persian demand that the Greeks surrender their weapons.

7:7. By the three hundred men...will I save you. The reason the LORD reduced Gideon's army against a larger force was so that He would get the glory. Also, the LORD did not want Israel to place any confidence in the arm of the flesh. The security and the safety of God's people lies not in buildings or budgets, not in armies or great generals, but in the LORD.

7:7. will I save you. Our victories in the work of the LORD belong to Him.

"Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle."

Martin Luther, 1529

**The Military Strategy of Gideon**

**8** 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.

**9 ¶** 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.

7:9. I have delivered it into thine hand. Before a trumpet was blown, before a sword was unsheathed, before a voice was raised to shout, the victory had been won because God had decreed the victory to be so. The outworking of human events is but a manifestation of the Divine decrees (Ephesians 1:11). It is true that Gideon and his men must do exactly what the LORD tells them to do, but the deliverance of the Midianites army into the hands of the Israelites is viewed as something already accomplished. The Christian can take comfort in this truth, that what the LORD decrees will come to pass.

**10** But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

7:10. But if thou fear. While the most fearful were sent away, there is still an element of fear to be found in the faithful. This is natural and must not be dismissed. True courage is to do the right thing despite fear, and other emotions, that might arise in the heart. Even David wrote, “*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*” (Psalm 56:3).

**11** 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.

**12** 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.

### A Providential Conversation

**13** 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.

7:13. came unto a tent. Literally, came unto the tent. Notice the definite article. The tent is probably a reference to the leader of the opposing army.

7:13. barley bread. This was the bread of the poor. The Midianites would be overcome by a poor show of force. Barley bread suggests a farmer. The Midianites would be overcome by a weak and lowly individual, not a great man in society. Such was Gideon. He was a thresher. He was poor. He was the cake of barley bread that would tumble into the host of Midian.

### The Sword of Gideon

**14** 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.

7:14. And his fellow answered. The Midianite was able to interpret the dream, which reminds us that the non-Christian can understand the gospel, even though it is not believed. This Midianite had also heard of Gideon, and providentially, mentions him by name. So the world knows about its enemy. The world knows the name of Jesus, though the world hates Him.

**15 ¶**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.

7:15. he worshipped. Having heard the dream and its interpretation, Gideon was able to rejoice in his heart and worship the Lord. He knew what he had done wrong to make him afraid. Specifically, he had overestimated the enemy. The church does the same. The church looks at the world, the flesh, and the devil and comes to a conclusion that it cannot possibly prevail. But the truth of the matter is that the enemy is scared to death of the gospel. Why did Rome persecute the church? Why did Communist China and Russia once confiscate the Bible and tear down the houses of worship? Because of fear.

The rulers of darkness are afraid of the power of Christ when His words are read and practiced by Christians. When the spies first went into the land of Canaan, Rahab said to them, *Joshua 2:9 ...I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.* Christian, rejoice. The church militant shall yet be the church triumphant. The church is not doomed to apostasy, as some teach. It is destined for greatness and glory. *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

**16** 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.

7:16.

### Gideon's Equipment

- A trumpet which, spiritually, speaks of sound and thus the gospel.
- Lamps, which spiritually speaks of the Light of the world.
- Empty pitchers, which spiritually, suggests that a soul must be empty of self. *2 Corinthians 4:5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

Swords are not mentioned, in order to emphasize how the LORD would confuse the Midianites, and cause them to devour one another.

**17** 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.

### The Sword of the Lord

**18** 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.*

**19 ¶** 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.

**20** 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.*

**21** And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

**22** 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 Beth-shittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

7:22. And the three hundred blew the trumpets. Encouraged with a belief in the presence of God, the three hundred men engaged the enemy, but not in their own strength or power. The battle and the victory would belong to the LORD.

**23** 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.

**24 ¶** And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

**25** 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.

7:25. and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon. Warfare is bloody and violent. Decapitation of the enemy was a familiar practice. Those who engage in warfare find their hearts going cold, hard, and indifferent even to acts of unspeakable cruelty. Oreb, took shelter in a rock, but was found and slain. Zeeb sought refuge in a winepress which is ironical, because there was a time when Gideon hid in fear by a wine-press (Judges 6:11). “But the places of their shelter were made the places of their slaughter, and the memory of it was preserved to posterity in the names of the places, to their perpetual infamy: *Here fell the princes of Midian*” (Matthew Henry).

***Special Note.***

If there is a spiritual lesson to learn from the routing of the Midianites and the decapitation of Oreb and Zeeb, it is that sin brings forth a death that denies any form of humor because it is so terrible. Individuals make jokes about eternity. One Irish toast says, “May your glass be ever full. May the roof over your head be always strong. May you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows your’re dead”. Of course, death, the devil, and hell are no laughing matters.

**Select Military Mutilations in Scripture**

• Driving a tent peg into the temple of Sisera.	Judges 4:1-22
• Gouging out the eyes of Samson.	Judges 16:21
• Decapitation of Oreb and Zeeb.	Judges 7:25
• Beating men with thorns and briars.	Judges 8:16
• Cutting off the foreskins of two hundred men.	1 Samuel 18:27
• Decapitation of Saul followed by nailing his body to the city wall.	1 Samuel 31:10
• Placing hooks in the jaws of captives for deportation.	Ezekiel 29:4

## JUDGES 8

### Claiming the Complete Victory

**1** And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.

**2** And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? *Is* not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

8:2. What have I done now in comparison. Gideon deflects the pettiness of the men of Ephraim by observing that what they did in capturing the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, might be considered more worthy of honor than his scattering the Midianites by lights and sound. By giving this soft answer, Gideon assuaged the anger of others. *Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*

**3** God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

**4 ¶** And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.

#### A Request for Identification with the Army of Gideon

**5** And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they *be* faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

**6 ¶** And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

**7** And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars.

**8 ¶** And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered *him*.

**9** And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

8:5-9. The men of Succoth and men of Penuel came to understand that there is no such thing as neutrality in the work of the Lord. Jesus said, *Matthew 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.* Christianity is exclusive. Christ is not a Saviour among many; He is *the way* (John 14:6).

**10 ¶** Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men*, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

**11 ¶** And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Joghbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

**12** And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

**13 ¶** And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,

**14** And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.

**15** And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are* weary?

**16** And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

**17** And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

**18 ¶** Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.

**19** And he said, They *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

**20** And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

**21** Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is*, *so is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

### The Grand Climax of Gideon's Life A Noble Stand

**22 ¶** Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

**23** And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

8:22-23. Rule thou over us. Gideon was offered a hereditary monarchy. This was something no one else was offered including Moses and Joshua. Gideon knew that God was to rule over His own people. Israel was different from the other nations of the earth until the days of Saul. Israel was meant to be a theocracy. If there is a danger to the church today, it is to repeat Israel's mistake and substitute a human ruler for Christ. Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23), and yet we find individuals claiming to be the Vicar of Christ. Is it any wonder that the Reformers referred to the papacy as the anti-Christ? The anti-Christ need not be someone who is against Christ, but someone who takes the place of Christ. The pope claims to take the place of Christ here on earth, as he wears a triple crown, and that is unacceptable. The LORD shall rule over His church.

### Gideon's Reward and Entrance into Spiritual Retrograde

**24 ¶** And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

**25** And they answered, We will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

**26** And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

## Entering into Idolatry The Spiritual Stumbling of Gideon

**27** And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even in Ophrah*: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

8:27.

### Five Lessons from the Life of Gideon

- God uses humble vessels in the work of spiritual ministry. *1 Corinthians 1:26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.*
- God calls men to ministry and empowers them for service. *Judges 7:7 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.*
- God will honor the faith of those who are not always faithful. *Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*
- God will often use affliction to test His people, strengthen their character, and force them to return and rely upon Himself. *Judges 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.... 7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites,*
- God will also test us in our prosperity. It was prosperity, not affliction, over which Gideon stumbled spiritually. Rather than direct the people to worship in Shiloh, Gideon allowed a false form of worship to be instituted at his direction. *Judges 8:27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.*

**28 ¶** Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

**29** And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

**30** And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

8:30. he had many wives. The many wives of Gideon gave him seventy sons.

### **Doctrine of Polygamy**

1. Hypocrisy is an indirect homage which vice pays to virtue. There is hypocrisy in the term “polygamy” for it tries to justify that which is unjustifiable by calling “plural” intimate partners a “marriage”.
2. However, from the beginning, it has been known that God has created one man for one woman.
  - *Matthew 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.*
3. Historically, polygamy arose as a natural outcome of tribal wars. With men being slaughtered in combat, women and children were driven into slavery or concubinage.
4. As civilization progressed so did the harem of the sheik or king. Set aside was the divine purpose for marriage whereby a man would leave his father and his mother to cleave to someone else who was to be his “helpmeet” (Genesis 2:18, 24; Matthew 19:5-6).
5. The matter of marriage became complicated even in Biblical times when people who were converted to Jehovah brought with them worldly ideas and customs illustrated when Sarah presented Abraham with a concubine.
6. Once Sarah had a child she saw the evil of polygamous ideas and induced Abraham to send Hagar, the concubine, and Ishmael into the desert to die, which he reluctantly did (Genesis 22:10-14).
7. The sin of polygamy, though found in Hebrew history for many centuries, led to other sins, such as that of emasculating men and making them a eunuch, in order to serve the king who wanted to protect his harem.
8. Needless to say, Gideon sinned by having many “wives” (Hebrew, ishshah; women) in an inappropriate way.

**31** And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

8:31. And his concubine. Rather than being separate from the world, Gideon conformed himself to a society that permitted plural marriages and saw nothing wrong with having a concubine in addition to multiple wives. On the matter of separation, Charles H. Spurgeon gives some very wise counsel based on 2 Corinthians 6:17: *"Be ye separate."*

"The Christian, while in the world, is not to be of the world. He should be distinguished from it in the great object of his life. To him, "to live," should be "Christ." Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he should do all to God's glory. You may lay up treasure; but lay it up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves break not through nor steal. You may strive to be rich; but be it your ambition to be "rich in faith," and good works. You may have pleasure; but when you are merry, sing psalms and make melody in your hearts to the Lord.

In your spirit, as well as in your aim, you should differ from the world. Waiting humbly before God, always conscious of his presence, delighting in communion with him, and seeking to know his will, you will prove that you are of heavenly race. And you should be separate from the world in your actions. If a thing be right, though you lose by it, it must be done; if it be wrong, though you would gain by it, you must scorn the sin for your Master's sake. You must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Walk worthy of your high calling and dignity. Remember, O Christian, that thou art a son of the King of kings. Therefore, keep thyself unspotted from the world. Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not these eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in his beauty-let not those feet be defiled in miry places, which are soon to walk the golden streets-let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are ere long to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy."

8:31. Abimelech. This illegitimate son of Gideon would one day kill all of his brethren except one. *Judges 9:5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.* Abimelech slaughtered his rival half-brothers without mercy because he wanted to be king. He did rule Israel for three years (Judges 9:22), but he was not the man his father was.

**32 ¶** And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

8:32. And Gideon...died in a good old age. Despite forming an idol, despite plural marriages, despite keeping a concubine, Gideon died "*in a good old age*" and honored in Israel. He is also honored in the New Testament as a man of faith in Hebrews 8:32. While his inappropriate behavior should offer no encouragement, or comfort, to those who live contrary to the known will of the Lord, his life does show the great grace of our great God.

## How Much Will God Forgive?

1. Knowing the weakness of humanity, God has made provision for individuals who sin.
- *1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

### ***Special Note.***

If you have never confessed your sins to God, and named them individually and personally, why not do so now? Two things will happen when you do this. First, God will forgive you. Second, God will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. God is faithful. He will consistently cleanse you every time you make your confession to Him.

2. When Jesus died a vast multitude of people yet to be forgiven of sin were in the future, such as you and me.
3. Christ died for all the sins of all those that put their faith and trust in Him. Jesus did not bear some of our sins, or most of our sins, but all of our sins, past, present, and future.
- *1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

“My sin, not in part, but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.  
Praise the Lord; praise the Lord,  
O my soul.  
It is well with my soul.  
It is well, it is well with my soul.”

4. Because of the death of Christ, every Christian can be confident that God has put away the pain, penalty, and pollution of sin.
- *Hebrews 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*
5. Because of the death of Christ there is now no future condemnation or judgment to be afraid of by those who walk after the Spirit.
- *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
6. Which sins will God forgive? He will forgive the vilest sinners. God will forgive fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, and the abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals).

- *1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

7. When a person is in Christ, old things pass away and all things become new.
- *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
8. The heart of every person can be encouraged to learn that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.
- *Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:*
9. How much will God forgive? The answer is that there is no sin too great for the grace of God as the slave trader John Newton discovered. After his conversion to Christ, in 1779, Mr. Newton wrote of the amazing grace of God.

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
 That saved a wretch like me!  
 I once was lost, but now am found;  
 Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
 And grace my fears relieved;  
 How precious did that grace appear  
 The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
 I have already come;  
 ’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
 And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
 His Word my hope secures;  
 He will my Shield and Portion be,  
 As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
 And mortal life shall cease,  
 I shall possess, within the veil,  
 A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
 The sun forbear to shine;  
 But God, who called me here below,  
 Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun."

**33** And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

8:33. the children of Israel...went a whoring after Baalim. The children of Israel went after Baal because they forgot there is grave peril in unconscious decay. The prophet Hosea spoke of those who had gray hairs growing, but knew it not (Hosea 7:9). Unconscious decay. Gideon had the gray hairs of spiritual compromise and thus decay, but he knew it not. In the end, Gideon left Israel as he had found it (Judges 8:33), and that is tragic. The judgment he gave Israel for forty years meant nothing. It changed no one. It is possible to have a ministry that is fruitful and useful, until sin causes it to be wrecked.

"Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,  
Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Sorrowing I shall be in spirit,  
Till released from flesh and sin,  
Yet from what I do inherit,  
Here Thy praises I'll begin;  
Here I raise my Ebenezer;  
Here by Thy great help I've come;  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wandering from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood;  
How His kindness yet pursues me  
Mortal tongue can never tell,  
Clothed in flesh, till death shall loose me  
I cannot proclaim it well.

O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

O that day when freed from sinning,  
I shall see Thy lovely face;  
Clothed then in blood washed linen  
How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace;  
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry,  
Take my ransomed soul away;  
Send thine angels now to carry  
Me to realms of endless day."

Robert Robinson, 1758

**34** And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

**35** Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.

8:35. all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel. Like any saint of God, Gideon was a flawed individual. Though, a man of great faith, he was a man of great foolishness manifested in the fashioning of an ephod or an image of gold which became a snare to him and his family (v. 27). In addition to this sin Gideon multiplied wives unto himself thereby breaking the divine design that one man should be married to one woman. Finally, Gideon went outside the state of marriage to keep a concubine who bore him a son.

And yet, despite moral and spiritual failures, Gideon is still listed in Faith's Hall of Fame. *Hebrews 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

If there is comfort in knowing that God can and does forgive great sinners and honors them, it is also true God wants His people to live a sanctified and holy life.

- *2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*
- *Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. 14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*