

# Jehovah Shalom: The Lord is My Peace

God Chooses Gideon

יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם



*Terebinth tree*

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**Text:** Judges 6:1-34

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**Series:** Drawing Near to God through His Name  
Wednesday night Prayer Meeting

**Introduction:** Open your Bibles to **Judges 6**. We continue our series entitled, “Drawing Near to God through His Name” and today we are going to learn that God is Jehovah-Shalom: The Lord is Our Peace!

In two weeks, we will commemorate 9/11 and consider how that day changed the way we live. I remember where I was when it happened – do you remember where you were? I was in a farm house in Spain. And I was putting on the roof of this farmhouse. I can remember my co-worker from Cuernavaca, Mexico, Juan Alvarez, and he said, “Something is wrong! Someone has accidentally flown a plane into one of the Twin Towers in New York City”. When the second plane hit, we realized it wasn’t an accident, but an act of war. It was terrorism.

Terrorism brings a real insecurity to people. Well, 3500 years ago, God’s people were having a 9/11 every other week. As far as Israel was concerned in the time of the Judges, the Midianites were the Al Qaeda of ancient world.

Imagine you “have a garden, and you work hard all spring and summer to make that garden produce abundantly. But every year, just about the time you’re ready to gather in the harvest, your neighbors swoop down and take your produce away from you by force. This goes on year after year, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”<sup>1</sup>

This is what was happening in Israel. Not only their produce, but their livestock, and the people were living in caves! They were terrified. They felt like they were in an impossible situation. The people were in idolatry, and they had no peace.

This is the backdrop of one of the greatest judges in Israel’s history – and his name is Gideon. God is so merciful that He raises up a man named Gideon, to call Israel to repentance and to give them a season of true peace – peace with God!

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be available*. An Old testament study. (44). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

What we'll find out tonight is that peace does not come from our manipulation of circumstances. Nor does it come through our own power or brilliance. True peace is found in God alone. As we trust in Him, we will experience true peace, even if there is a storm raging all around us.

It's a great story, but what does it have to do with us?

## I. Sometimes God's people experience **a lack of peace** (vs. 1-10).

It could be the loss of a job. It could be difficulties in relationships at work, home, or on the job. It could be your health. Trials come in all shapes and sizes. But we must understand that God sovereignly directs these trials for our good and for His glory.

A. For Israel, God brought **sovereign** suffering. "*the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years*" (vs. 1).

Judges 6 (ESV) — "The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and **the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian** seven years. 2 And the hand of Midian overpowered Israel, and because of Midian the people of Israel made for themselves the dens that are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel **and no sheep or ox or donkey.** 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents; they would come like **locusts in number—both they and their camels could not be counted—so that they laid waste the land as they came in**".

God's people were in a miserable bind. They were living in the Promised Land without enjoying the promised blessings—the milk and honey, the wheat and barley, the peace and prosperity. For seven years Midianite raiders swarmed over their land like locusts, stealing everything in sight. How could this happen to God's people?

Well, actually, it was the LORD who gave Israel into the hand of Midian! "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens". The first thing you should do if you experience suffering is thank God that He loves you enough to bring the hard trials into your life in order to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 1:11** (ESV) — tells us that God "works all things according to the counsel of his will". Now this does not mean that God causes sin, for "God cannot be tempted with evil neither tempts He any man" (**Jms. 1:13**). But God allows evil and wickedness and works out His plan perfectly in spite of it. With Joseph we can all say **Genesis 50:20** (ESV) — though someone may have "meant evil against me, ... God meant it for good". Indeed nothing truly bad happens in a Christian's life because "all things work together for good, for those who are

called according to his purpose” so that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:28-29**).

B. It was **purposeful** suffering. “*the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD*” (vs. 6).

Here we see in verse 6, “And Israel was **brought very low** because of Midian. And **the people of Israel cried out for help to the LORD.** 7 When the people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the people of Israel. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage. 9 And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land.””

The children of Israel had been freed from slavery in Egypt, but their idolatry had made them weak and unprotected by God, so they were vulnerable to a new oppressor. Finally God’s people cried out for relief. This was the purpose for the suffering. God wanted His people to be humbled and to see their need of Him. And that is God’s purpose in all your suffering and mine. God wants us to see just how weak and helpless we are. We need Him. I need Him. You need Him.

C. It was a suffering that could have been **avoided**. “*you have not obeyed my voice*” (vs. 10).

“10 And I said to you, ‘I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.’ **But you have not obeyed my voice.**”

We are not yet like the Lord Jesus Christ. Any difficulty is ultimately for our good. All trials are a form of chastening. It may not be a specific sin in your life. But every trial we have comes because we are not yet conformed perfectly to the character of Jesus Christ. We all have a lot of growing to do, so we can expect a lot of trials.

## II. Suffering is God’s **megaphone** to draw His people near. He wants to meet with us! (vs. 11-21).

A. The terror. “*Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites*” (vs. 11b).

“11 Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the **terebinth** [TYPE OF OAK] at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son **Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.**”

Gideon was very busy as the Lord sat under the Oak tree. Gideon was busy working out his plan trying to protect himself. The entire nation was terrorized. They were hiding in caves and dens.

B. The Visitor. *“the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth”* (vs. 11a).

Gideon's story really begins with a divine encounter. The angel of the Lord greeted him, saying, “The LORD is with you, mighty man of valor,” as though to say that God's mere presence would be enough to transform this fearful man into a mighty warrior capable of winning the peace for an entire nation.

Gideon himself, the **“mighty warrior,”** had been hiding in this winepress when the angel of the Lord [THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST] appeared to him.

Sometimes, when we lack peace, we think we have to secure our victory, like Gideon beating the chaff from the wheat and hiding it at the winepress. We think we need to manipulate the circumstances, and who is sitting there patiently under the oak tree? It's the Angel of the Lord. This is God's messenger, the Second Person of the Trinity, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. It's Jesus there under the tree. When hard times come we tend to think that God has forsaken us. We tend to try to find our own solutions. We must always remember **Hebrews 13:5** (ESV) — “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

How many of you have tried to find your own solution for your suffering, when Jesus is right there waiting to talk with you. The one who created the universe and all that is therein can help you.

C. The transformation. *“The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor”* (vs. 12).

“12 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor.” 13 And Gideon said to him, “Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

Look at what God calls Gideon. He says: you are a mighty warrior! But Gideon has a burning question: if God is with us, then why has all this happened? It seems like God has forsaken us.

D. The surprise. *“Please, Lord, how can I save Israel?”* (vs. 14).

“14 And the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” 15 And he said to him,

“Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” 16 And the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” 17 And he said to him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.” And he said, “I will stay till you return.” 19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. 20 And the angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them.” And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.”

Have you ever been in an impossible situation? **Do you ever feel like a spiritual weakling?** Often we think we have to be “super Christian” for God to use us. But the opposite is true. *God uses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty.*

If you attempt anything for God, it is often when you feel the weakest that God will use you. He will often present you with the most confusing and volatile situation so that you will know it is completely beyond your control. God uses weak people so he can get all the glory. It is God alone that ultimately brings His peace to confusing and difficult situations, so that we will know that He is mighty and He is our fortress and protector and peace. No human being can bring the peace that God brings.

Here’s how God works. He uses weak people! Consider Moses who could not speak, and little David, the littlest of all his brother, whom God told Samuel to anoint king. And then what about Saul—though he was great, God made him small. He counted all his human accomplishments as dung, and God changed his name to Paul, which means “small one”.

If you feel you are weak, then you are right where God wants you!

### III. True peace is being **right** at peace with God (vs. 22-34).

A. God alone can bring true peace. *“Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD Is Peace” vs. 24.*

“22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.” 23 But the LORD said to him, “Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die.” 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, **The LORD Is Peace.** To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.”

The peace we long for comes only from God. We need the reminder because we are so easily fooled into thinking that personal security lies elsewhere—in a fat retirement account, the perfect relationship, a good education, a prestigious job. And if we aren't careful, the blessings we crave may turn into desires that destroy our peace. Real peace comes only from practicing the presence of God.

B. God's peace comes by removing all idols.

“25 That night the LORD said to him, “Take your father’s bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night. 28 When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. 29 And they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And after they had searched and inquired, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” 30 Then the men of the town said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it.” 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.” 32 Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, “Let Baal contend against him,” because he broke down his altar. 33 Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 But the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon, and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called out to follow him”.

We know what follows here. Gideon eventually destroys the Midianites with only 300 men!

**Conclusion:** If you have been feeling troubled and restless, harassed or oppressed, take a look inside. What's stealing your peace? What's making you anxious and frustrated?

- Have you slipped away from God?
- Have you become too busy to practice His presence and seek his face?
- Are there idols in your heart and life that are slowly taking you away from God?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, cry out to God as the people of Israel did in Gideon's day. Ask him to draw you more deeply into his presence, delivering you from the enemies of your soul intent on stealing your peace and robbing you of the good things he intends.