

Gideon's Warrior Band

Revival

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: Judges 6-8

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Have you heard the phrase, “Been there, done that”?

“Been there, done that. Been there, done that.”

It is kind of a common phrase in our society today. It usually means we don't want to go there again. I have been there. I have done that. And usually, too, it is associated with something uncomfortable, something we didn't enjoy, perhaps a pain, a disappointment. And we say, “Been there, done that.” We don't want that anymore. We want to move on to better things.

Well, that phrase, “Been there, done that,” describes Israel as we have examined over the last few weeks. The children of Israel fall into a very repetitive pattern, a cycle, a cycle of sin. They disobeyed God. They doubt his Word. They turn to iniquity and to idolatry. God interferes against them, brings enemies against them and oppresses them. They cry out to God for relief and he provides a Savior for them, a judge who brings them rest and relief from their oppressors only to repeat the cycle again after the judge dies.

We find it, again, in our study for today. This time it involves a man that perhaps you know his name, Gideon. It involves him as the judge. I did not print out sheets of Scripture for you today, because we want to look at a rather lengthy section of Scripture that covers the story of Gideon. It actually covers three chapters in the book of Judges, chapters six, seven and eight. I didn't think you wanted that all printed out on a sheet of paper. It would be very small print and you probably couldn't read it and neither could I.

But I will tell you the story of Gideon. And we will learn from his circumstances and how God worked in his life and in the children of Israel. They sinned again. This time after Deborah. Deborah and Barak brought them victory. They had a great celebration and we read about it in Judges chapter five, only to fall back into sin again after the death of Deborah and Barak. And their sin follows a very repetitive pattern. It begins with infidelity, unfaithfulness to God, a failure to believe and to trust God for what he said and that he would do what he said he would do. From that they go further into sin into iniquity. They not only doubt God, but because they don't fully believe and trust God, they disobey him. And they go contrary to God's commands for them. They end up in

idolatry. We find that in Judges chapter six. This time the oppressors come from the Midianites.

It says that God moved upon the Midianites and he sent them to oppress Israel. He handed Israel over to them. He allowed the Midianites to come in and overtake them and to suppress them. And their oppression was very grave. More so than any of the other enemies. The Midianites came in and they destroyed all of their crops. They brought their herds and their flocks and camels in and they would eat the crops of the Israelites, destroying them on the sake of their cattle and their herds. And they would take the leftovers and bundle it and take it back to their homelands, virtually starving the Israelites.

You can imagine how the Israelites felt, starving, barely enough to eek out a living and sustenance. In the midst of their oppression they cried out to God for relief. “God help us. We need your help.”

God did an interesting thing when he heard their cry. He sent to them a prophet. Now in the past with the judges when they cried out, God answered. This time God sent a prophet and the prophet came to them and said—this is the Tom Hill version—“Why should God answer your prayer? You have disobeyed him again and again and again. And this in spite of the fact that God has proven himself to you. He proved himself to you by bringing you out of Egypt with a mighty hand. He brought you through the wilderness. He brought you into the Promised Land and he defeated your enemies before you just like he said he would. And while in the wilderness he miraculously provided food for you. And then you disobey him and then you think God should come and bail you out.”

Now that is the Tom Hill version, but that is, in essence, what the prophet said. And they continued to cry out to God for help. And God answered. He appeared to a man by the name of Gideon. And when the angel of the Lord came to Gideon he said, “Hail, you great, wonderful, strong champion warrior.” And at the very time that the angel came to him and called him those wonderful descriptions, Gideon hid from all of the Midianites around him and was threshing his wheat in a winepress, a winepress that was surrounded with walls so that the Midianites would not see him in there harvesting his grain. That was who God called a great, mighty warrior. Who said God doesn’t have a sense of humor?

Here was this man who feared for his life and for his sustenance threshing his wheat in a hidden wine press and God comes and calls him a mighty warrior. Well, God calls things that are not as though they are. And he called Gideon a mighty warrior, because he would become a mighty warrior under the hand of God. God told Gideon what he wanted him to do. “I want you, with your hand, you are going to destroy the Midianites as though they were one man. It is going to be like one man against one man.” And, boy, that just kind of blew Gideon away, because he had seen the horrors of Midianites described in the Bible like locusts covering the field, thousands of them.

And Gideon said, “How am I going to do this?”

And God said to him, “I want you to do something. I want you to make an active commitment. I want you to destroy the altars to the false gods that your father has built on his property and I want you to go and I want you to destroy them. And in their place I want you to build an altar to God and to sacrifice an offering to me there.”

Well, again, this mighty warrior in the middle of the night went and destroyed his father’s altar and built an altar to God in its place and used part of the altar to the idol as firewood for the sacrifice to God.

Gideon wanting some confirmation from the angel that he had actually called him to go against the Midianites, asked for a sign. I want some kind of indication that you really are God and you really are behind this charge that you have given to me. I don’t want to just go out there on my own. I am not going to go on my own. I need to know for sure. And so he gave to this angel two tests to determine that he really was telling the truth. The first test: I have got a piece of wool and I am going to lay it out on the ground and over night I want the wool to gather dew from the air the ground to be dry all around it. Well, that wasn’t really too hard of test, because that is what wool does. Wool attracts moisture. So it would be somewhat more easily drawing the moisture out of the air than the ground. So the next day he rose up and sure enough, the patch of wool was saturated with water and the ground around it was dry.

Not quite satisfied, Gideon said one more test. Tonight I am going to put that thing out and this time I want it to be wet all around the ground and the wool dry. Ah, a little bit tougher test.

The next morning he awoke to find the wool dry and the ground wet around it. Now confirmed in his mind that God had called him to go to battle against the Midianites, he put out a call to the nations about him, his brothers and sisters and he said, “Come with me. We are going to go against the Midianites.”

And they came by the thousands to join him as a mighty army.

At the beginning of chapter seven we read God speaking to Gideon and said, “You know, there is a problem here, Gideon.”

And Gideon said, “Just what is that?”

And he said, “You have got too many men.”

Now can you imagine that, going to battle with too many men, having God come to you and say, “Now I have called you to do this, but, you know, you have got too many men. I want you to get rid of some. You have got too many.”

So Gideon put out the call and he said, “If there is anyone here that is frightened by the thought of going to war against the Midianites, you can go home.”

I don't think he quite expected 10,000 to leave. Ten thousand men left, went home. He has 12,000 now.

God said to Gideon, "You have still got too many, too many."

"What? Half of my troops are gone and you tell me I still got too many?"

"You got too many."

So God gave Gideon a test. Here is how you test and determine how many are really the soldiers I want. he did the test and God said, "There is 300 of them there. That is your army."

Can you imagine going to war against thousands of people with 300 men? God said, "That is your army. Go against the Midianites. I will be with you. I will defeat them."

Gideon came up with a rather ingenious plan. The Midianites lay in a valley. There were some mountains around the valley. Gideon gave to each of his 300 men a trumpet, in that day not a trumpet like ours, but a ram's horn sort of like a trumpet. And he gave to each them a torch and a jar. And they put the jar over the torch so that it wasn't seen and the trumpet in the right hand. And he split the 300 men into three groups of 100 each and the surrounded the Midianites. And at midnight, at his call, they destroyed the jars coving their torches and they lifted their torches in the air and they blew on their trumpets all in unison together.

The Midianites, looking about them and seeing the lights and hearing the noise became confused and in disarray and they began to fight each other and they fled in fear.

Three hundred men put to flight thousands of Midianites. Was it the 300 men or was it God? It was clearly God. Three hundred men couldn't do that. God used those ... that small band of men, faithful and obedient to him to put the Midianites into confusion and in the confusion to flee away. Out of the Midianites who fled there were four leaders, especially, who tried to escape to the North. Gideon saw them and he took his 300 men in pursuit of those four leaders and captains and kings of the Midianites. He quickly captured two of them and he killed them. On his way in pursuit of the other two he came to some other Israelites on the other side of the River Jordan, on the eastern side. And he said, "Come and join me. We are chasing down these other two rebels who have fled away and we need your help to come and join us."

And they said, "Have you got them yet? Have you got them yet?"

"No, we haven't..."

"Well, when you get them, come back."

So Gideon said, “You will live to regret this day.”

So he left with his 300 men in pursuit of the two and they found them and they killed them and Gideon came back to those two cities who had rejected his plea for help and he punished them severely for their failure to join with their brother and sister Israelites in pursuit of the enemy.

After the destruction of the Midianites, great peace rested in Israel. In fact, during the time of Gideon it said they had rest for 40 years.

Shortly after the victory against the Midianites, the children of Israel wanted to make Gideon king.

“We want to make you king. Will you be your king and your children and your grandchildren after you following in your footsteps to rule over us?”

And he said, “No, I am not going to rule over you. God must rule over you.”

And Gideon yielded to a very strong temptation, gold. When they had captured the Midianites, they took in a great amount of gold and they wore them in earrings. And he said, “I won’t become your king, but one thing I would like is I would like you to give me your earrings.”

So they gave the their earrings and the gold. And Gideon took the gold and he melted it down and he made himself a fancy chest plate. They called it an ephod, a fancy garment that he would wear about this chest. And that fancy garment became a great source of temptation and sin for the children of Israel, because they worshipped the ephod as though that ephod did anything to provide victory over the Midianites.

No, but it became a snare to them.

In time Gideon died. After his death we read at the end of chapter eight in Judges that the children of Israel disrespected Gideon’s family and they went right back into sin again. So that is the story of Gideon kind of in a nutshell.

Why would God preserve that record and provide it fro the children of Israel? Because that is who it when to initially. Well, God wanted the children of Israel to see the great wickedness of their sin. It seemed like such a little thing to doubt God and to not trust him. And that unbelief took yet another form. They believed an untruth. They didn’t believe the truth, but they did believe an untruth. The depth of their unbelief and unfaithfulness to God and their infidelity produced and resulted in iniquity. Their iniquity took two major forms, insubordination against God. They rejected God as their God. And they disobeyed him. And their insubordination caused them to integrate with the other nations that they should have destroyed at God’s command.

As a result of their integrating with the nations within the land, they fell prey to idolatry. And God in his justice brought judgment against them. And God wanted them to see the wickedness of their sin.

God also wants them to understand him. God wanted them to understand God and his nature. It is more than just a good idea when God says that sin, rejected, turn from it. And they tended to just view it, oh, that is just God's ideas. We don't need to listen to that. And they rejected the sovereign rule and authority of God over their lives. And in justice, he punished them for their sin. He brought, first of all, the Midianites against them to oppress them for seven years. And then he judged Gideon for his sin. But God is also a God of mercy. He is not only a God of justice and wrath and judgment, he is also a God of mercy, because when they cried to him because of their sin and he sent them the prophet to point out their sin, he could have just left them alone.

“You are getting what you deserve. You disobeyed me. You doubted my Word. Live with it. That is your problem.”

Oh, but God didn't do that. In mercy he came down and he sent them a deliverer through whom he brought deliverance to this wayward rebellious people. Even though it was a repetitive experience, he did it again. He brought deliverance to them yet again. That also proves God's faithfulness. In faithfulness to himself. He had promised that if you turn to me and trust me I will destroy your enemies. He told them that before they went into the Promised Land. And as they trusted him and obeyed him, they experienced victory over their enemies time and time and time again.

They only went into oppression and suppression from their enemies when they failed to trust and obey God. So here was another example of where God in his faithfulness, in his promise to them that if you turn to me and trust me, I will overthrow your enemies. And he did. And he gave them back their land that they enjoyed at rest for 40 years.

He also wanted to remind the children of Israel that they need a Savior. They need a Savior. They can't do it on their own. And this need traces all the way back to the very beginning of creation when God created the heavens and the earth and he placed man upon the earth and created man and woman. He created them in their image. And he created man and woman a moral being, upright, without sin, obedient to God, trusting him fully and completely and joyfully in fellowship with God. We read that they worked and tilled in the Garden of Eden. We don't know for how long. It doesn't tell us, but long enough to name all the animals.

But then the tempter Satan came in the guise of a serpent and tempted them to doubt God. Did God really say that? Did God really say don't eat of that fruit? Did he really say you would die if you ate of it? And they chose to doubt God and believe a lie, because the lie was that they would become like God. And they sinned. Immediately they began to die. They lost fellowship with God. They no longer had fellowship with him as they once experienced. And they hid from God when they heard him calling in the garden. And they knew they had sinned and they devised garments to clothe themselves.

Only grace could fix it. They could not, nor did they want to fix it themselves. God in his grace said, "I will provide a Savior." And God began to progressively reveal a Savior. What the Savior would do, what he would look like, identifying him through Scripture. And as we come to this story of Gideon and the battle against the Midianites we see a little bit of a picture of the Savior, someone who was the seed of a woman, because that is what God promised, the seed of a woman would come and the seed of the woman would bring deliverance from the enemy.

The problem was with Gideon and all of the other examples that preceded him, they had just human flesh, sinful human flesh. And so they were weak. They could not provide the victory that mankind really needed. The destruction of the enemy and the reversal of the effects of sin in their lives. Gideon couldn't do that. But he did give a little picture of a Savior.

Well, as Scripture further unfolds, after Gideon it reveals that ultimately God did provide that Savior that he promised and that he progressively revealed throughout Scripture, his Son, Jesus, who came in human flesh, but beyond just mere human flesh like you and me, God in human flesh. And he destroyed sin fully when he died on the cross and when he rose victorious from death he overcame the enemy just as God had promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden, that the Savior would crush the head of the serpent.

And through Jesus Christ now he enables those who believe him and trust him to reverse the effects of sin that they inherited in birth. God's plan of redemption at work even now, at work in lives of men and women like you and like me throughout all the earth, restoring people back to himself, reconciling them back to himself, bringing them to faith in Jesus and overcoming evil in their lives and reversing the effects of evil in their individual lives. And this will continue until one day all of his enemies will lie under his feet. And he will return and the consummation of all things will occur.

The final end of sin and the beginning of the new resurrection of the life that God provided through Jesus Christ.

Well, how can these things work in our lives? How can the Spirit of God apply these truths to you and to me today? They occurred centuries ago. Do they have any implications on our lives today? Is there anything there that we can learn that apply to us? Oh, a great deal, because, you see, the description of the children of Israel at the time of the Midianites describes our day today, people like you and like me, oppressed, maybe not by Midianites, maybe not even by a foreign nation, but oppressed by sin and oppressed by the evil one and all of his fellow angels. And we see it even within the Church of Jesus Christ, a failure to believe God for who he says he is.

God says, "I am God and there is no other. Make no other gods. Do not bow down to any god beside me. Don't make any images of other gods. I alone am God. Worship me and me alone."

And sadly even in our day today we have failed to believe what God said centuries ago. For we have inserted into the mix ourselves. And we have said, "Well, God does his part and I do my part and together we just have this happy time."

No. That is not what the Bible says. You have no part. There is no good in you that can somehow become a part of God. It is all of God or nothing. And we see that depicted clearly with Gideon and his battle against the Midianites. Is there any possible way that 300 men could cause the flight of thousands of their enemies?

If I would approach that to you, you in your sanity would say, "Tom, you are an idiot. You are a fool. Old age has gotten to you early."

No, it only occurred because of what God did through Gideon and through those other men who served faithfully with Gideon.

We need the power of God in our lives today. The Church of Jesus Christ needs the power and presence of God functioning and operating within the Church today. We, like the children of Israel, have integrated into our society and we have become just like them. We can hardly tell the difference anymore. God said, "No, you are to be different. You are to be like me. And I will work in you to reverse the effects of sin in your lives and I will make you progressively more and more and more like me."

The Church of Jesus Christ needs that today desperately. And we as individuals need it as well. We need to become progressively more and more like Christ and it begins with faith, calling upon Christ in faith to fulfill in us and for us that which only he can provide. He is the only Savior, the only one whom God has provided that can fully satisfy all that we need and that God requires. God requires payment for sin. Jesus paid it. God requires that we become more like Christ. Jesus enables us by the Holy Spirit to become more like Christ. We need to get rid of the sinfulness in our lives that we might become more holy. Jesus provides that by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Since God brought revival to the children of Israel over their oppressors, the Midianites, through a lesser savior, Gideon, therefore we must call upon the greater Savior, Jesus Christ and trust him casting upon him ourselves, our present lives and our future, calling upon him to save us, to change us, to bring about in us that transformation that only he can bring.

We must do that to become the people of God as the Father desires of us.

How will you respond? Will you just reject it and turn aside? Will you put it off and say, "I will think about it some more I will think about it some more"?

I saw a bumper sticker on a car not too long ago that reminds me of the danger of putting it off. It says, "There are many people who said they were going to wait until the midnight hour to call upon Christ who didn't make it past 11:30." You see we don't have the certainty of even this afternoon. We think we do. We have plans for this afternoon,

but we really don't know. Even people in good health like us, things could change in a moment. We only have right now. We can't put it off.

If you have never called upon Christ, call upon him now. Trust him now. Claim him as your Savior, the one who has promised to save all who believe in him and who call upon him. And he will begin to work in you to transform you into his very image just like him.

Many of us try to copy his life. Oh, that is futile effort. Only he can make us like him. And he does that inside of the lives of those who trust him and call upon him. I pray that the Spirit of God will bring to you today faith and trust upon Jesus the Savior and that you will trust him to bring about in your life that transformation to make you more and more like Christ as he came to fulfill. I pray he will do that for you beginning today.

Let's close in prayer.