

Judges 6-8 The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon

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[0 : 00] In the book of Judges, it's in the Old Testament, and a distinction needs to be made between the Old Testament and the New Testament, or between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and that is what we are reading in the book of Judges pertains to the Kingdom of Israel.

It doesn't pertain to the Kingdom of Christ, and the Kingdom of Israel and the conquest, it was by warfare, it was defended by sword and by spear, but the Kingdom of Christ is not advanced in the same way.

The Kingdom of Christ isn't advanced at the tip of the sword or at the tip of the spear. However, tyrannical kings in church history have certainly tried to do so. They've tried to force religious convictions upon people at the tip of the sword, and it didn't work out, because tyrannical kings cannot command the heart.

It's only the King of Kings who commands the heart. And he does so by his word and by his spirit. Isaiah 2 verse 4, it says, For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Now, Christ as judge, and in the Kingdom of Christ, while there may be still war occurring on the earth, the Kingdom of Christ itself is not advanced by metaphorically tools of warfare, but by that of agriculture, by sowing and reaping.

[1 : 36] Now, that in mind, let's jump into our text. And really, we're going to be looking at Judges 6, 7, and 8, three chapters. We'll read chapter 7, but we will gather information from chapters 6 and 8 as we unpack chapter 7 itself.

So, we will read Judges 7. Then, Jerubal, that is, Gideon, and all the people who were with him, rose early and encamped beside the well of Herod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Morah in the valley.

And the Lord said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against me, saying, My own hand has saved me.

Now, therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.

And 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained. But the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many.

[2 : 58] Bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be that of whom I say to you, This one shall go with you, the same shall go with you.

And of whomever I say to you, This one shall not go with you, the same shall not go. So, he brought the people down to the water, And the Lord said to Gideon, Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself.

Likewise, everyone who gets down on his knees to drink, and the number of those who lapped putting their hands to their mouth, was 300 men. But all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

Then the Lord said to Gideon, By the 300 men who lapped, I will save you. And deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other people go, every man to his place.

So the people took provisions, and their trumpets in their hands, and he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those 300 men.

[4 : 03] Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley. It happened on the same night that the Lord said to him, Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand.

But if you are afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah, your servant, and you shall hear what they say. And afterward, your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp. Then he went down with Purah, his servant, to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp. Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the east, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts.

And their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude. And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion.

He said, I have had a dream. To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian. It came to a tent and struck it, so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.

[5 : 12] Then his companion answered and said, This is nothing else but the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel. Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.

And so it was when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation that he worshipped. He returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.

Then he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand with empty pitchers and torches inside the pitchers.

And he said to them, Look at me and do likewise. Watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp, you shall do as I do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch. And they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands.

[6 : 26] When the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hand and the trumpets in their right hand for blowing, and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

And every man stood in his place all around the camp, and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp, and the army fled to Beth Acacia toward Zerah, Zerah, and as far as the border of Abel-Meholah by Tabith.

And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh and pursued the Midianites. Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites and seize from them the watering places as far as Beth-berah and the Jordan.

Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth-berah and the Jordan. And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeb.

They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeb they killed at the winepress of Zeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

[7 : 51] Our great God, we thank you that we have divine revelation, that we have your word, that which is sufficient and authoritative and infallible and complete.

We pray that as we seek to sit under the ministry of your word, that you would lead us into all truth by your spirit, that you would make your word effectual to us, that you would give us a right knowledge, a right understanding.

I pray, Lord, that you would use even me in the preaching of your word to accomplish your purposes. I pray that you would be glorified, the saints would be edified, and that your kingdom would be advanced. I pray that you would forgive us of all of our sins today, and Lord, that you may free our minds of all distractions, that we may think of you, your excellencies, your wondrous works, and hear you speak through your word.

I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, in the book of Judges, in chapter 7, what we see going on in this chapter is that the power of the Lord is made perfect in human weakness to the praise of his glory.

The power of the Lord is made perfect in human weakness to the praise of his glory. So, we see again the canonization cycle. So, first of all, look at the canonization cycle.

[9 : 10] Secondly, another agent of deliverance. So, the agent of deliverance in this chapter. And then third, we're going to look at the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

So, first of all, the canonization cycle. As we have progressed through the book of Judges, we see this cycle continuing to happen. The people of Israel had settled into the promised land, and having settled into the promised land, they failed to drive out the evil, that is, the immorality and the false religions and the idolatry.

And instead, they embraced it as their own way of life and their own way of religion. And as such, we see that they forgot the Lord, they forsook the Lord, and then they worshipped the Baals.

And then, because they had forsaken the Lord, covenant sanctions then kick in, and the Lord raises up oppression against them, which causes them to cry out under oppression for salvation, to cry out for deliverance.

So then God raises up a deliverer, and that deliverer then defeats the enemy, liberates them from the bondage, from the oppression, and being freed from the oppression, they then return to their evil ways, they return to sin, and then the cycle continues.

[10:34] So, first we saw Othniel, Othniel, the Lion of God, against the king double evil, and then after that cycle we saw Ehud, the left-handed assassin who had a special message from God for Eglon, the oppressive evil enemy.

Then after that we saw Shamgar, whose name means the sword, and he used the ox goad, which functions as something which pricks a beast of burden under the yoke of bondage to persuade it in the way in which it needs to go, and then after that we saw Barak with Deborah who was as a mother, and Barak delivers Israel, and then we see that Sisera's head was crushed by Jael who's most blessed among women, and we see a bloody spike in a crushed skull, and then we find ourselves in today's chapter and we find that this canonization cycle continues yet again, which shows us that there is a need for salvation.

People are sinful and people need to be saved and their need for salvation is demonstrated to them by whose initiative? Is it their own desire to do God's will that they see their need for salvation?

Notice that they want to use their freedom to pursue sin, but it takes God oppressing them to show them their need for deliverance to cause them to cry out for deliverance.

So, here we find them in need of salvation with God's intervention, divine intervention, and they're crying out for deliverance.

[12:23] Because what has gone on is renewed apostasy. The people once again forsook the Lord, they once again worshipped the idols. Now, when we read about this, we read about the Baals and the asterisks, and these are idols which are constructed or carved image, but idolatry isn't always just a figure or a false God.

Idolatry today still continues, but it may not be in the form of a Baal or of an asterisk. Idolatry continues today because when God made us, he made us with a rational soul, and he put his moral principle within us, in our hearts, and by the light of nature, so by nature itself and by our reason, we know that there is a God, we know that that God is to be worshipped.

So, by the way in which God has created us, we long for that worship. We long to worship the object which is worthy of our worship, but sinful mankind, without the gospel, doesn't know the truth of that object, doesn't find the way to God.

We know it is God, but by nature we don't have access to God, we don't have redemption. So, sinful mankind longs to worship something which is worthy of our worship, but without having God as that object, tries to find anything else to fulfill that object of worship.

And so, as such, worship then is, instead of being directed towards God, as God who is the highest good and the chief end, other things are sought out, which things are that are created, instead of the creator, things that are created as though they are the highest good or the chief end.

[14:14] the human heart finds other idols and sets up those things as the highest good or as the chief end of their existence. And this isn't just the unsaved, this can even happen within the church.

Even church going believers can idolize and worship created things as though they are the highest good and chief end. That could be a career, it could be children, it could be reputation, it could be wealth, health, pleasure, comfort, ease, prosperity, one's own self or one's own personal empire. So while these things in and of themselves aren't sinful, but when we place these things as the highest good and as our chief end, it is placing them as idols, it is placing them higher than God, putting the created things as higher than the creature itself.

So these things aren't bad in themselves and God gives us these things as blessings for the purpose of us enjoying God. But when we use God to enjoy the blessings, that's when it becomes idolatry.

So what do we know? We know that people are prone to wander again and again and again and that apart from the grace of God, we would seek and serve any other thing that we could other than God who alone is worthy of our worship.

[15 : 43] It's God alone who is worthy of our worship. So praise God for his word and spirit which function as an ox goad which pricks the soul of the beast of burden under the yoke of the bondage of sin and sends them in the way in which they should go.

Now, in chapter seven, we see that the Israelites were subjected to the repeated raids of the Midianites. The Midianites, there's history of battle there.

They are a pre-existing enemy and the Midianites are desert dwellers from northwest Arabia and we also see the Amalekites and that's not the first time we've seen the Amalekites as an enemy so we have two long-standing enemies which the Israelites are now subjected to the repeated raids of their enemies.

And it's when we read these details, it's hard to really feel what they would have felt. It tells us that the enemy was as numerous as locusts and maybe when we think of locusts, we might just picture one little locust, but the reality is that locusts would come in swarms or hordes which are so large that it devastates everything.

As far as you can see, just swarms of these locusts that consume and devastate everything. And we're told that the enemy here is compared to being as numerous and as destructive as locusts, as numerous as the sands of the sea.

[17 : 19] And because of that, the Israelites are reduced under the oppression to living in dens and caves. They're reduced to living as animals. So this would be even worse than the oppression that they were under Cicero.

Under the oppression of Cicero, we're told that village life ceased. They're not even living in the villages anymore. They are now pushed into dens and caves, living like animals.

And finally, under such oppression, they cry out to the Lord for deliverance. Which brings us to our second point. The people have sinned again and cry out under oppression for deliverance.

So our second point is the agent of deliverance. As we've worked through the book of Judges, we see who the agent of deliverance is. And so, in our text today, in chapter seven, the question is, who is today's Old Testament deliverer?

So, Israel cries out under oppression. And this is where we're going to reach back into chapter six to get some details. We didn't read through that this morning, but I'm going to draw on some details that are in chapter six to help understand where we are at in chapter seven.

[18 : 35] Now, when the people of Israel cried out to the Lord in chapter six, what God does first is he sends them a prophet. This is interesting.

Try to picture, if you will, what it would have been like to be surrounded by an enemy so large that it's like the sands of the seashore or so large that it's like an immeasurable number of locusts that just decimate and cover as far as you can see, and they're reduced to living in dens and caves, and they cry out for deliverance, and God sends a prophet.

That would be kind of like if there was a wildfire, and that wildfire is picking up momentum, and it's coming towards your house, and you call 911, or you call 310-FIRE, and they send a paperboy.

The paperboy comes and he says, extra, extra, read all about it, wildfire is about to consume the house, which is of flammable materials. Be like, thanks, I already knew that, that's not what I was hoping for.

God sends them a prophet when they cry out for deliverance. Now what do you think he does that for? What's God trying to say? What is going on is that he's telling them that the Midianites are not the problem.

[19 : 58] This innumerable enemy, which is threatening their destruction, is not actually the problem, because they were in a covenant relationship where they were to be God's people, and he was to be their God, and when they were to settle in the promised land, they were to obey God, and they would get covenant blessings, and he would protect them from their enemies.

But if they were to disobey, then the covenant threat, or the covenant sanctions, was that he would give them over to their enemies. So, what's going on here is that it's not that the Midianites are the problem, the problem is the Israelites, it's the people, it's their sin, it's their doing evil in the sight of the Lord again.

That is why the Midianites are there. So it's reminding them that the real problem is their sin, the real problem is them. And some might say that even with today, with the preaching of the gospel. They might say, I've got all these earthly problems, and you think that the gospel is going to help me. But the truth is, is that faith and repentance is the true need, and the gospel is the true answer, which we will come back to.

So God sends a prophet, and then following that in chapter six, after God sending a prophet, remember that the judges who deliver Israel are military leaders, and that's what they were looking for.

[21 : 23] So, after God sending the prophet, then we see that the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon, and the Lord tells Gideon, this is important, he tells Gideon that the Lord was to deliver Israel through Gideon.

In six, verse 14, it says, go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have I not sent you?

It's pretty clear, isn't it? He couldn't be more specific. It's without question that he is sending Gideon, and he will give the Midianites over into his hand. But, what we learn from the details in chapter six, is that Gideon is timid.

Gideon is hiding in a winepress from the Midianites. He is afraid, he's timid, and when God tells him, when the angel of the Lord tells him this, that you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, have I not sent you?

Gideon's response is that he says that he's the least man and the weakest clan. Look at chapter six, verse 15. So he said to him, oh my Lord, how can I save Israel?

[22 : 41] Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. What Gideon's doing here is he's saying, you're really scraping the bottom of the barrel by choosing me to be the deliverer.

But, that's what the Lord has said. So, Gideon is hoping that this isn't actually the case, because he is timid, he is afraid, he is hiding, and he doesn't see how he, in his weakness, in his fear, can be a deliverer.

When I was in high school, a friend of mine and I, we used to do these social experiments in our local mall, and my recalling of this is not normative, it's narrative to the children, but what we would do is we'd go to different ends of the mall, and when somebody's walking down the middle of the mall, minding their own business completely unexpected, one of us would be walking behind, and the other one would come from in front, and then throw our arms out as though we're ready to embrace the person, come running at them, and the person gets this look first, it's like, oh, this is interesting, but then they're like, oh, I don't know this person, and they're kind of hoping they can just disappear and hide, but they don't know what to do, and then at the last minute, the person behind steps out, and we give a hug, and the person feels embarrassed and kind of disappears into the shadows, I think that's what Gideon was hoping, I think he was hoping he could just kind of disappear and that all of this, all of this salvation through him was perhaps the wrong person, because he recognizes that he is afraid, he recognizes his weakness, and he just wants to kind of get out of the way, but in

Judges 6, we see what continues to happen, Gideon remains weak and afraid, but God starts to use him and strengthen him, notice what happens in verse 25 to 32, Gideon brings down the altar of Baal, and he does so by using two of his father's bowls, having brought down the altar of Baal, and he hacks down the wooden image beside it, he then builds an altar to the Lord, he makes a fire with the wood that he had hacked down, and then he takes the second bowl, he slaughters it, and he offers the bowl as a burnt sacrifice, and he does this at night time, he does it at night time because he's afraid, but he does obey God, and he does tear down the false idol, now when he does so, we see that what happens is that the men of the city, including his family, were worshippers of Baal, so they're not happy with Gideon for doing this, so because they're worshippers of Baal, now they have beef with Gideon, and there's a rift in the relations, and as such, they want

Gideon dead, which is interesting because this is the people of Israel, this is to be God's people, and Exodus 20, verse 3, it says, you shall have no other gods before me, it's not Gideon is the one that should be seen as the one who should be dead, it's the people whom have forsaken God and set up false gods, so what happens next is that Gideon's father says, let Baal contend for himself, he says, let Baal contend for himself, Joash is his name, let Baal contend for himself, let Baal plead

for himself, let him contend for himself, and by doing so, Baal is shown to be powerless, because Baal isn't a god, Baal is nothing, Baal is just a figment of the imagination, there is but one only, the living and true God, so, by this demonstration, Baal is shown to actually be powerless, let Baal contend for himself, but Baal does not prevail, and as such,

[26 : 57] Gideon's name is then changed to Jerubbaal, and Jerubbaal means let Baal plead against him, or let Baal struggle against him, or let Baal contend against him, so, because of this, again, just to summarize, Baal is shown to be powerless, and Gideon's name is changed to Jerubbaal, which means let Baal contend against him, so, the internal problem is dealt with, and tearing down the idols, now to move on to the external problem, have you ever had it where maybe you've been in a crowd, and there's a lot of people, maybe it's been in a lecture, and you're sitting in the chairs, or it's a conference, or a seminar of some sort, and the person's teaching, so you're just kind of in listening mode, and then for whatever reason, you're pointed out, all the attention's on you, maybe you're asked a question, and maybe you're not like me, maybe I'm the only one that feels this way, but you're like, are they actually talking to me, are they actually looking at me,

I can't tell, and you're about to answer, and you're like, but what if they're not, and I embarrass myself because they're talking to somebody else, and anyways, God is dealing with Gideon here, and he is talking to Gideon, but Gideon still is not resolved, which is interesting, because don't forget what has already happened, the angel of the Lord told Gideon what was going to happen, it's not that Gideon didn't already know, it's not that it wasn't clear enough, so Gideon does his test with the fleece, and this test, this two-fold test, once for the fleece to be wet from the dew and not the ground, and then for the ground to be wet, but not the fleece, this is not an act of faith, this is an act of doubt, this is not taking God at his word, this is not trusting God according to his clear direction, because the

Lord has already told him, so Gideon is not trusting God at his word, so it's not an act of faith, it's doubt, and as such, it shows Gideon's weakness, again it shows Gideon's weakness, but what's so significant about this whole chapter, about this whole account, is, and I'll say this many times, is that God's power is made perfect in human weakness, God's power is made perfect in our weakness, so we should not look to this account of Gideon and the fleece as something which we should do, we do not need to do a fleece test towards God, according to his revealed word, which is true, and trustworthy, and sufficient, and authoritative, and infallible, so what's going on, what this is about, what truly this is about, is God's faithfulness, God will do what he has said, that is the case with Gideon, God has told him what he will do, and God will do what he has said, that is the case today with his revealed word, and that what

God has said in his word, God will do, now in Revelation 20, we read about an enemy as numerous as the sands of the sea, and in both cases, we know that God wins, doesn't matter how vast the enemy, how innumerable the enemy, whether it be like the sands of the seas, that God wins, victory belongs to the Lord, salvation belongs to the Lord, and the gates of hell cannot prevail, regardless of how innumerable the enemy is, God will win, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church.

Now, now we are into chapter 7, which is what we have read, and we see here, beginning in chapter 7, is that Gideon's army is too many.

[31 : 06] It's too big, because we see a reason in verse 2 that there are too many, is that they must not glory in being saved by their own strength.

Okay? So, whoever is afraid, they're to turn around and to go home, they're to return. And 22,000 turn around and go home, leaving 10,000.

That's more than two thirds of the army turn around to go home. And, but it's still too many. So, two thirds of the army has been reduced, now it's down to 10,000, and it's still too many, it's still too large, lest they glory in their own strength.

So, then, by the 300 who lapped the water is who will continue. Now, when we read this about the difference, setting apart those who lap as dogs compared to those who get down on their knees, when we read this, if you're questioning your drinking etiquette, that's not the point of this.

There's no moral meaning behind that of whether you drink like a dog or with your hand. what's going on by this test is that God is making a point, and he's doing so with the most unlikely or with the fewest.

[32 : 34] And we can understand this in John 3, verse 30, which says, he must increase, but I must decrease. So, in the decreasing of the army, God increases through the demonstration of his

power, of his strength.

So, this salvation of Israel is clearly not by human achievement. It's being reduced, reduced, reduced, to demonstrate God's power, made perfect in human weakness. The Lord will save them and deliver the enemy into their hands.

Now, it's been reduced to 300, an army of 300. And this just, when you think about the odds, it can't be done. We don't know exactly how many the army was, but it was at least 135,000, because as we read in chapter 7, 120 fell, and then they pursued after an army of 15,000.

So, there's at least 135,000 warriors, and 300 are going to go up against them. It just can't be done. Logically, it can't be done. But God strengthens Gideon's resolve and courage. He does so first in chapter 6, through fire that comes up through the altar, and then the test of the wet fleece and the dry fleece, and then this account with the watering hole, and then finally, there's one more thing which God does to strengthen Gideon's resolve, and that has to do with a loaf of bread.

[34 : 07] This is an interesting part of the narrative. It involves an enemy's dream, and an interpretation which, this just demonstrates the sovereignty of God.

The fact that the enemy had a dream, that Gideon was there to hear the enemy talking about his dream, that another member of the enemy had an interpretation of the dream, and that Gideon heard the interpretation of the dream, and what it meant.

What an unexpected sign from a sovereign God. And as a result from it, what did Gideon do? Gideon worshipped. 715, Gideon worshipped.

Gideon is now resolved. He is strengthened to obey the Lord. And this speaks much of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

The victory we see is God-given. The victory belongs to God. The victory was God-given. God is the uncaused first cause.

[35 : 14] But Gideon and his men still showed great valor. Gideon and his men still did their duty as the second causes.

So God as the uncaused first God, and humans as second causes. Now, the Second London Confession of Faith, in chapter 5, paragraph 2, says, although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, so that there is not anything befalls any by chance or without his providence.

Yet by the same providence he ordered them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. So the bottom line is, or to summarize it quite simply, is that the duty is ours, but the result is the Lord's.

The result belongs to the Lord. Now, there's a popular phrase which has been attributed to Oliver Cromwell, who is a 17th century parliament new model army commander, and that phrase which is attributed to him is, put your trust in God and keep your powder dry.

The duty is ours, the results belong to the Lord. So, in chapter 7, the Lord put the enemy into a confusion against themselves, their own swords against themselves.

[36 : 44] This task that just can't be done, 300 against at least 135,000 enemy, how could there possibly be victory here? And the Lord puts them into confusion, he puts their swords against themselves.

the Lord puts the enemy into confusion, and then Gideon and his men obey God. So, how did this unfold? What happened? What are the details?

Remember how, as we've looked before at these accounts of deliverance, they don't give all the details, but the details that they give tell us something.

So, what are the details to how this happened? First of all, Gideon divided the 300 into three companies. Okay? So, divide them into three companies, and each person has a trumpet.

There's a trumpet in every man's hand, which would have been a ram's horn that they would have used as a trumpet, and empty pitchers.

[37 : 47] So, these pitchers would have been made out of clay or earthenware. And then we saw torches, torches that they were to put inside of these empty clay pitchers.

Then they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, and they cried out, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And then, as a result, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp.

And resulting out of this, we see, and then as we look, if we were to look further into chapter 8, Gideon's success and Gideon's failure.

Gideon becomes arrogant. He no longer seeks the Lord, and then he leads Israel into idolatry. In Judges 8, in verse 22, we see the people of Israel, they want Gideon to rule over them. And while it doesn't say as a king, it's as that of a monarchy, where his descendants would then rule over in succession. But Gideon, he declines it.

[39 : 00] He says no, but we can see that he knows it's the right answer to say no. He says no, the Lord shall rule over you. He knows that's the answer, but it's not what his heart desire is, because he then turns around and begins to act as though he was a king, getting them to do things which a king would do to give them their gold, and we'll see what comes of that.

But it's interesting, because Gideon says the Lord shall rule over you. He knows that's the right answer, but his actions that follow demonstrate that that's not actually his heart's desire. He leads them into idolatry. It's the right answer, but he doesn't actually want the Lord to rule over them, as we see of what comes next.

So Judges 8, 27 to 28, that's actually just two verses, we'll flip over and read it. 27 and 28, then Gideon made it, that is the gold, then Gideon made it into an ephod, and set it up in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there.

It became a snare to Gideon and to his house. Thus, Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more, and the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.

[40 : 28] Gideon starts off by tearing down a wooden idol, and he ends off by setting up a golden idol. Which brings us to our third point, that Gideon is not the skull-crushing seed of the woman, promised in Genesis 3.15, but he does paint a picture of salvation.

Gideon doesn't serve as a role model for us, but he does serve as an example. He serves as an example of the weakness of the flesh.

Gideon was timid, Gideon was hiding, Gideon was trembling, and he was afraid, but what is it that we keep seeing over and over again, is that God's power is shown through human weakness.

That is, the almighty power of God and human weakness. Now in Judges 6.12, we see, and the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. And then this is where Gideon responds by saying, oh my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

[41 : 50] So again, he's saying, you're really scraping the bottom of the barrel here by choosing me to save Israel. But the angel of the Lord said, you mighty man of valor.

Why did he say that? It's what goes before it that's so important. It says, the Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor. It's because the Lord was with him. It's the almighty power of God and human weakness.

And then in 6, verse 34, it says, but the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. So we see where the strength come from. Gideon was weak, he was timid, he was hiding, he was afraid.

But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, that he blew the trumpet and the Abizrites gathered behind them. So what's so important about this is that Gideon being naturally timid was spirit empowered.

Okay? Now God's glory being spread to all the earth through the spread of the gospel occurs instrumentally through the weakness of the church.

[43 : 01] Gideon. And I've been thinking, as we read this account of Gideon, what does this have to do for us? What does this have to do with the church age? What does this have to do for me?

God's glory being spread to all the earth through the spread of the gospel occurs instrumentally through the weakness of the church. Now Romans 10, 14 to 15, we read of this formula of salvation.

It says, How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? That's a good question. And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

That's another good question. And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things?

Now keep that in your back pocket. That's important. We're going to come back to it. But Gideon's name, if you remember, Gideon's name was changed to Jeroboel, which means let Baal contend against him because he has torn down his altar.

[44 : 12] Let Baal contend against him. And what happened? Baal did not prevail. Let Baal contend. Baal did not prevail against him. Now in Matthew 16, 18, we see that Christ will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Judges 7, 2 says, And the Lord said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against me, saying, My own hand has saved me.

See, God uses the weakness of Gideon and the 300. It's the weakest man from the least clan and an army reduced down to 300 against innumerable horde of the Midianites.

And so also, just as God by his almighty power used the weakness of Gideon at 300, so also God uses the weakness of the church instrumentally against immeasurable odds, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christ will build his church, and his church will stand triumphant. Now, there's five things I want to draw out particularly from this text.

[45 : 32] The first one is a tumbling loaf of bread. It's curious, isn't it? Second thing is the trumpets, which would be ram's horns, so these ram's horn trumpets.

The third thing are the fragile, empty clay jars, these pictures made of clay, with torches inside of them.

The fourth thing being the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, and the fifth thing being the spirit of God. Verse 22 says, when the 300 blew the trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp, and the army fled.

Now, how does this translate into today? What does this have to do with us? We've seen in the book of Judges typology, that is the promise of Christ and his kingdom, or a shadow of Christ and his kingdom.

A church in today's age, the church, which is the pillar and the ground of the truth, is the trumpet of the gospel.

[46 : 44] the ram's horn, that is the sacrificial substitute ram, the lamb of God who was slain.

The gospel, which is the good news of Christ crucified for sin. The church is the trumpet of the gospel. The word of God, which, you know, is the sword of the spirit, is made effectual by the spirit of God.

The church is to trumpet the gospel, which comes from the sword of the spirit, and is made effectual by the spirit of God. Now, remember what happened with Gideon, is that the proclamation of the sword of the Lord sent the enemy scampering.

The church is called to the proclamation of the gospel, gospel, and we can see this happening in numerous ways. So how in this church age are we to trumpet the gospel?

How are we to trumpet that of the sacrificial substitute ram, the lamb of God who was slain? First of all, as preaching, preaching as a means of grace.

[47 : 57] God's kingdom, Christ's kingdom, is advanced through the pure preaching of the word, the preaching of the gospel. Second of all, fathers leading their families in family worship and teaching the gospel to their families, as well as parents in everyday life teaching their children of the gospel.

Also in gospel conversations that we have with people around us, people whom God by his providence have brought into our life, having gospel conversations with them, proclaiming the good news of Christ's suffering and subsequent glory, faith, and the gospel call of repentance and faith. Furthermore, friends in which we have in this life, our neighbors, our co-workers, our community, you might be saying, yes, but I am weak, and that's exactly the point.

Gideon was weak, the apostle Peter was weak, Paul was weak, and that is exactly the point. The duty is ours to trumpet the gospel, and the results are the Lord's, not, the results aren't the Lord's because of our strength, the results are the Lord's because of his almighty power, which is brought through the word, sorry, which brought the world, sorry, the almighty power of God, which the results belong to the Lord and his almighty power, and it's the almighty power of God which brought the world into existence.

It's the almighty power of God which raised Christ from the dead, and it's the almighty power of God which gives dead sinners new life. It's the almighty power of God through human weakness and the proclamation of the gospel.

[49 : 39] The sword of the Lord and of Gideon, that is divine power using human weakness. I'll say it again, God's power is made perfect in human weakness.

So, having looked at the trumpet, what about these fragile empty jars of clay? They have these pictures which would be made of clay, which they broke, they're fragile, these jars of earthenware. I want you to keep your finger in Judges, because we're going to come back to it, but I want you to turn over to 2 Corinthians 4, 7. 2 Corinthians 4, 7.

Follow along with me. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Perhaps your version might say, this treasure in jars of clay.

That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. Now, look back at that verse, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

[50 : 54] And right after the comma, maybe you'll see a little letter there. This is a cross-reference which will send you either into your margins or to the bottom of your page. So look at that letter and go down to see what the cross-reference says.

The cross-reference will say Judges 7, verse 2. It's connecting the dots here. That we have this treasure in jars of clay, in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

It's about divine power and human weakness. What is this treasure that's contained in these jars of clay, in these earthen vessels? What's the gospel? So, back to our text.

The jars of clay, with Gideon, these jars of clay were broken so that the torches would shine forth. the breaking of these fragile, empty jars were so that the light could shine forth, unleashing the light. And the treasure is the gospel. This treasure shines through our brokenness and faithfulness to trumpet the good news of salvation in Christ.

[52 : 13] Now, the book of Judges, it keeps speaking about deliverance from oppression, from bondage. There's this language of bondage and under the yoke of slavery, and now there's this use of light, of light and darkness.

Now, this occurred at night. It was in the darkness that the earthen vessels were broken and the torches were able to shine and the light was unleashed. So, there's much imagery here of the bondage of oppression as well as darkness and light shining forth in darkness.

And this paints for us much of a picture of today's age and sinners by nature who are in bondage to sin.

See, the gospel doesn't just free us from the penalty of sin. Well, that is true. It's more than just that. It's that redemption frees us from the power of sin.

Sin holds power under sinful mankind that we, by our nature, fallen, sinful mankind, are in bondage and in darkness.

[53 : 16] That is, we're tied down. Bondage is like shackles with chains. We're prisoned. We're fallen mankind is tied down that they cannot get out of it and they're in darkness.

They cannot see around them. It's as though you cannot see the way. So, it's this picture of being chained and shackled in bondage, unable to rise up and being surrounded in complete darkness, not being able to see.

Now, I've used this illustration before, but it's quite helpful. If you have light darkening curtains in your house, imagine doing this test where you close the door, you shut off the light, and you pull the curtains, these light darkening curtains, so there's no light.

There's no light in the room whatsoever. Okay? Throw open the curtains and see what wins. Does the darkness win or does the light win?

Does the darkness overcome light and light flees or does light overcome darkness and darkness flees? Do the experiment ten times and see out of each time which one wins.

[54 : 32] We don't need to do the experiment because you know that ten out of ten times light prevails and darkness flees. And that is what's significant about what's going on with these torches, these lights in these earthenware jars of clay that are being broken to unleash the light.

In Ephesians 5, 13, actually in 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 4, 6, says this, 2 Corinthians 4, 6, for your bondservant, sorry, for it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God and the face of Jesus Christ.

and then flip over to Ephesians 5, chapter 13, it says, but all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore, he says, awake you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Fallen, sinful human mankind, according to their sinful nature, are in shackles, they're chained, they're in darkness.

They cannot save themselves. So, they need divine intervention, they need those shackles to be removed and for light to shine in darkness, which is the imagery which is used.

[56 : 08] So, you think, okay, this picture is good and well, but how does the person who has shackles on them and are chained down in bondage and in the yoke of slavery to sin and are surrounded in darkness, how do they get out of it?

Because they're bound, they're chained, they're in darkness. How do they get out of it? Well, we already know the answer to that. What does Paul say? Why is he not ashamed of the gospel? Because it's the power of God to salvation. The gospel is the power of God to salvation. And as we already read in Romans, a call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How can they call unless they believe? How can they believe unless they hear? How can they hear unless it is preached? And then as that formula works through in verse 17 it says, faith comes from hearing.

It comes from hearing the gospel. That is the way in which the chains of the bondage to sin come off and light shines in darkness. This is through the gospel. But it's not just the gospel proclamation. [57 : 12] That's the word. It's being attended by the spirit. The spirit of God making the word effectual to the hearers. Just as with Shamgar. Shamgar's name means sword.

But it was through the functioning of the ox code which pricks the soul and sends the beast of bird in the way in which it ought to go. So we see here light being unleashed and the enemy scattering. Now one more thing before we conclude is we don't want to forget about the Midianites dream. You might be thinking you forgot about that loaf of bread. Well don't forget about the Midianites dream. If you remember the dream was about a loaf of bread tumbling down. It's quite curious isn't it? A loaf of bread rolled down and then it overturned the tent and then as a result the whole camp was turned upside down.

John 6:35 says and Jesus said to them I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

[58 : 24] Jesus is the bread of life. In this dream a loaf of bread came down. In the New Testament we see the bread of life came down from heaven and through human weakness turned the world upside down.

Acts 17:6 as it describes the spread of the gospel refers to those whom are spreading the gospel as those who have turned the world upside down. The bread of life has come down in the incarnation from heaven and through human weakness has turned the world upside down.

So to conclude God uses unlikely and unexpected people. That's a theme we've seen all throughout the book of Judges.

It is true with Gideon and it's true today that God uses unlikely and unexpected people. The power of God is made perfect in human weakness. So blow the trumpets, break the earthen jars, unleash the light and watch the bread of life turn the world upside down through human weakness.

The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Remember Gideon's name, we received a new name which was Jerubel. So Gideon aka Jerubel which was let Baal contend against him.

[59 : 42] So the sword of the Lord and Gideon let Satan contend against the church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Furthermore, if you are not a Christian, if you are still under the oppression of sin, the bondage, the shackles, the darkness, enslavement, the guilt of sin, the power of sin, the condemnation of sin, look not to human heroes, look to the perfect and flawless deliverer.

Look to the promised skull crushing seed of the woman who defeated the enemy. That is, embrace the Lord Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel. Receive him and rest upon him alone for salvation.

Let's pray. God, our great God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the gospel, this treasure which shines forth through the weakness of humans and these jars of clay.

We pray, Lord, that you would use us, that you would use the church for the gospel proclamation in our lives, in our community, and in this church, and through us, and in our families. We pray, Lord, that we might see your kingdom advanced even through human weakness.

and we praise you, our Lord God, for your almighty power, this power through which the world came to be, this power through which Christ was raised from the dead, and this power through

which dead sinners are made alive.

[61 : 09] We pray, Lord, that you would be at work in our midst despite our weaknesses. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.