

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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A Call To Action

by Dan Trygg

“Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, ‘The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior.’ ¹³ Then Gideon said to him, ‘O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, “‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’” But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.’ ¹⁴ The LORD looked at him and said, ‘Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?’ ¹⁵ He said to Him, ‘O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house.’ ¹⁶ But the LORD said to him, ‘Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.’ ¹⁷ So Gideon said to Him, ‘If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me.’”

Judges 6:11-17

The call of Gideon is a powerful example of how God's perception of us is so radically different than our own. God sees us in light of what He can do with us, our *future potential* in Him. We tend to see ourselves in light of our past history, what our weaknesses or failings have been. Most of us tend to disqualify ourselves from doing anything significant for God, ...or having a meaningful impact on people..., because of our sense of inadequacy, inability, or what we perceive as a lack of credibility in the eyes of others. We live lives of mediocrity, dissatisfaction, ...even quiet desperation..., and never step out to discover what God can really do with us. We don't believe that we have anything special to offer. We disregard the inner feelings that prompt us from time to time, ...feelings of outrage at certain injustices, ...yearnings of compassion to help the hurting, ...or nudges of the Holy Spirit to tell others about Jesus, or simply to meet a need in the lives of others..., simply because we don't believe we can make a difference.

Because Israel had been unfaithful to the Lord, by disregarding His moral standards and by dabbling with other gods, God allowed them to be defeated by their enemies, the Midianites. These nomadic tribesmen came through Israelite territory on raiding parties, stealing crops, destroying property, and intimidating and attacking people. The land was overrun with them, and the average Israelite settler was practically defenseless. They had to hide themselves, their livestock and their valuables, or they would be attacked. **At such an oppressive time, Gideon was in a winepress, attempting to thresh some grain so that they could eat.** Normally this was done out in the open, but the Midianites were watching for the Israelites to thresh their wheat so that they could sweep through and take the grain. They didn't want to do the work of threshing, but they would show up to collect the finished grain after the Israelites had separated it from the stalks and chaff. **Gideon was in the winepress, with just a small amount of wheat, so that he could thresh enough for immediate use in a place that would be less visible to the Midianites.**

The angel of the Lord appeared to him while he was threshing, and said to him, “Yahweh is with you, O valiant warrior.” Actually, the Hebrew would be better translated, “...O bold, audacious man of strength.” How contrary to how things *appeared!* Here, **Gideon would seem to be anything but a bold, audacious, warrior.** He is timidly hiding in a winepress, beating out a few sheaves of wheat. Was this a bold, mighty action? No. Not compared with an image of a mighty warrior. *But* he was taking the risk of doing *that*. We don't know what anyone else was doing, but Gideon at least took the risk to come out of hiding enough to do these bare essentials. **What may have been there in Gideon's inner man, in seed form, was what God looking at and addressing in Gideon.**

Note Gideon's response, “If Yahweh is with *us*, then why has all this happened to *us*? And where are all His miracles our fathers told us about?” The first thing to note is that *Gideon bypassed the personal nature of this word from the Lord.* The Hebrew of the angel's greeting was singular. He was addressing Gideon *alone*. “Yahweh is with *you*, Gideon.” Gideon did not let that message sink in. He universalized it to the entire nation. The second observation, however, is that *his heart was somewhat jaded and agitated by the dilemma his nation was in. He knew it did not have to be like it was.* A third observation is that *he knew well the stories of God's actions in the past. He knew God could deliver by miracles.* He had done it before. Gideon knew this, and did not doubt God's *ability*. It was clear, however, that this miracle-working God was nowhere to be seen. Where was this miracle-working, Deliverer? Gideon also knew that God had abandoned Israel, and had given them over to their oppressors.

The angel's response drove the call of Gideon home. “Go, in *this your strength*, and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian.” What? This may seem obscure, at first. What strength? *Gideon's strength was that he knew God was a miraculous Deliverer.* He knew that if this miracle-working God was indeed with Israel, Midian would be no match for Him. “Have I not sent you?” The angel of the Lord is speaking for God, here. **He was commissioning Gideon to do this work.** This was not something Gideon was initiating on his own. God was appointing him to this mission. *It was God's timing, God's calling, and therefore God would enable him to do this task.*

Note Gideon's "stinkin' thinkin'" response to this, "*Who am I that I should deliver Israel?*" I am a nobody. I have never done anything like this. My family is "the least in Manasseh" and I am the youngest in my father's house. Gideon's feelings of inadequacy were clouding his judgment, and his focus turned inward. **Instead of remembering what his strength was**, ...that if the miracle-working God were with him, then the Midianites would be defeated..., **Gideon was distracted by worldly qualifications**. Who am I? Who is my family? *The world wants to qualify us by our past background, education, and experience*. On a surface level, this only makes sense. In most matters of life, you want someone who has a proven track record, someone who has the education, training and experience to do what is required. *God, however, many times chooses to bypass all of these considerations*. He often chooses to use people who have none of these so-called "advantages". *He takes those who would be considered the "least likely", so that His great power can be more clearly seen*. Many of the great Bible heroes came from obscure, or seemingly disqualified, backgrounds, but, *with God*, went on to do incredible things. In the NT, Paul puts it this way, "...the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the ill-born things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God" (1 Corinthians 1:25-29).

God's answer to Gideon's objections was, "because I will be with you". **Gideon will be able to deliver Israel because the miracle-working God will be with him to do so**. "...and you shall strike the Midianites as one man". This means that they would stand or fall together, ...and God was saying that they *would* fall together. In other words, this would not be a long, protracted struggle. He would not be fighting thousands of Midianite soldiers, one at a time, ...a task that would have seemed overwhelming, if not impossible. Instead, **God would use Gideon to strike a decisive blow against the Midianites that would be like a knock-out punch to a single combatant**.

At this, Gideon's tone changes. Because of his faith in God, the issue for Gideon is not whether or not Yahweh could do as the angel has said, but "Is this really You, God?" He *wants* to believe, but he has to make sure. Remember, the angel of the LORD (LORD = Yahweh) had come in human form. He was sitting under the oak tree near the winepress Gideon had been working in. **This was not doubt; this was wisdom**. Remember, His strength was in the miracle-working God. He was depending on the one true God to act on his behalf, or this whole enterprise would surely end in disaster. **He had to make sure this was God calling him to action**, not some cruel joke or a charlatan attempting to lure him into some plot. "If now I have found grace/pity in Your eyes, **give me a sign that it is really You** speaking with me." Gideon, asked the stranger to stay, so that he could show him the hospitality of a meal. The Hebrew word for "offering" here could also be translated "meal" (e.g., Gen. 18:8 when Abraham entertained angels and God in human form). He probably desired more private conversation with this man who spoke so strangely. Upon his return, the angel instructed him to put the meat and bread on a rock, and pour the broth over it. When Gideon did so, **the man touched the meat with the end of his staff, and fire came from the rock and consumed the food and broth entirely! At the same time, the man disappeared! -- This was a very clear sign!** -- At first, Gideon was afraid, but the voice of God assured him. Then Gideon built an altar there as a memorial to the Lord.

Then the training process began in earnest. God asked Gideon to take a more definitive stand for Him by destroying an altar and image to false gods. Gideon did as God asked, *but under the cover of darkness*, because he feared the people. As he had feared, people wanted to kill him for his action, but his father came to his defense, and convinced the people to let these gods avenge *themselves*, if they were real. Immediately after this test, the Midianites came into the countryside in great numbers. **The Spirit came upon Gideon, and he rallied the Israelites to fight. God wished to make clear that He was the deliverer, so He had Gideon dismiss most of his 32,000 man army, leaving only 300 choice men to defeat the Midianites. Along the way, God catered to Gideon's lack of confidence, continually guiding and encouraging him by specific signs of confirmation**. God's plan was a bold, audacious plan, one which left Gideon and his men nearly defenseless. It required great faith, the kind of radical, "go-for-broke" commitment God had built up in Gideon. The plan worked perfectly, and they decimated the Midianite army. **From there, we see Gideon move boldly into one skirmish after another until victory was completely secured**.

What can we learn from Gideon? *God knows who we are better than we do. If we trust and obey Him, He will develop us and prepare us for what He has in mind for us to do. There will be risk and stretching along the way, along with signs of His leading. Finally, with Him, we can do unimaginable things with very little.*