

SERMON: NOT AN ANSWER JUST SIGNS AND ORDERS

JUDGES 6:11-16

(11) And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. (12) And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. (13) And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. (14) and the Lord looked upon him. And said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have I not sent thee? (15) And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. (16) And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Introduction

Gideon is a man somewhat overlooked, but worthy to be set alongside the foremost heroes of the Bible. He lived in a period in which hope had died out among God's people. For seven successive years Israel had suffered from an invasion by the Midianites. God allowed this to occur as a way to chastise His people for their sins. The villages were abandoned and farmers were hiding their harvests of grain from raiding parties. Many of the Israelites ran to the hills and hid in caves. The Midianites would wait until harvest time and then swoop down and take all of their food. They took all they wanted and destroyed everything else. The Midianites' strategy was simple and sinister: they would allow the Israelites to plow and plant, to till and toil, and then take it by force at harvest time. The Israelites cried to God for deliverance. Despite their disobedience, God heard their prayers. God chose Gideon, a cowardly farmer's son, to be the liberator. An angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon when he was secretly threshing grain by the wine press. To his amazement, the angel addressed him as a "mighty man of valor." The angel assured him God was with him and directed him to go in God's might against the Midianites; he was to lead the charge that would save Israel. Gideon had his doubts. He doubted his ability to amass and lead an army. He was not only uncertain of his ability, but also of the people and of the whole purpose of God in relations to Israel. Gideon raised a sarcastic question that God did not answer. Instead, God gave him orders. I have divided this narrative into ten mini-scenes. Please do not let the number of mini-scenes give you the false impression that this will be a long sermon. For most of us this is a familiar story and it will be a review. To quote Spurgeon again: "It's the same soup warmed over, and we dare not change the recipe."

Exposition

1. Stern Chastisement
2. Solemn Cry to a Gracious God

3. Strange Calling
4. Sarcastic Question
5. Strict Orders-Not an Answer
6. Signs to Authenticate the Calling
7. Strange Test to Separate the Committed from the Curious
8. Strange Weapons-Trumpets, Pictures and Lamps
9. Stunning Victory
10. Scared Wimp Became a Winning Warrior

Closing Thoughts

There are many lessons to be learned from the life of Gideon. The one that out shines all others is this: on this side of eternity no situation is hopeless. No one sinks so low that our loving God cannot lift him. We will never have all the answers. God did not promise us answers. He promised us his abiding presence. This gives us His blessed assurance. Like Gideon, we must follow His orders and not wait for all the answers. Then our terror will become tranquil peace. Give God glory! Give God all the Glory!

Related Scriptures

Judges 6:1-40; Judges 7:1-22

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