

Heroes of Old #1 – Gideon (fearless)

We're starting a new series this morning called "Heroes of Old". In this series, we are going to look at some Old Testament stories about someone who got involved in a struggle. And for almost all of them, just like many of us, **a big part of their struggle was with fear.**

Then we are going to see how God delivers them from their fear to a very strong point of faith. So much so, that we now refer to them as "**Heroes of Old**" even though they may have been shaking in their boots at the time.

We will be looking at the truth we read about in II Timothy 1:7, *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.* God has not given us a spirit of fear, and yet, so many people today live paralyzed in fear.

Today, we are going to examine the story of a guy named **Gideon**, a guy just like us. This is the guy who was scared to death of people known as the Midianites.

Judges 6:1-2, *"Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years God gave them over into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds."*

Two hundred years before this, Israel had defeated the Midianites, but then, over the years, Israel got cocky and they started to think, "**Hey, we're awesome, we're good,**" and they stopped depending on God, and because of that God removed His blessing, and Israel stopped increasing in number.

And sometimes **we** get to thinking we can handle everything on our own and God has to give us more than we can handle to make us realize that we need Him.

It was like God was saying to the Israelites, *"If you're so great without Me, I'll just let you do life without Me."* Meanwhile, the Midianites were multiplying like rabbits. In fact, they became so numerous that the Bible says they were like swarms of locusts. They were everywhere.

For two hundred years, the Midianites were **seething**, wanting **revenge** against Israel for defeating them. And according to historians, the Midianites, were the **first people to domesticate the camel.**

They could use the camel in **warfare**; they could get places faster and in better shape than others could. For two hundred years they plotted revenge, and then when they grew more numerous than the Israelites they attacked.

And in Judges 6:3-6, you can see on how bent they were on hurting the Israelites. *“Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops...and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up... like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the LORD for help.”*

Israel was now **living in poverty**. They were scared and hiding, because the enemy was so great. That’s when God sent an angel of the Lord to a guy who was very afraid. His name was Gideon. Verses 11-12. *“The angel of the Lord came down and sat down under the oak tree...where... Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites.”*

Now, what is going on here? Gideon was threshing wheat, but he was hiding in a winepress, because he was afraid that the enemy would attack him and kill him and take the grain.

Verse 12 says, “When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, *“The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”* He called him a mighty warrior, which is almost hilarious, because Gideon was hiding in a wine press because he was afraid.

Few things cripple us more than fear. We want to witness but we fear we won't have all the answers if they ask questions. We fear rejection and ridicule. We fear we aren't up to meeting the overwhelming needs of so many who are suffering, confused, alone. But then we think of Paul's reminder to Timothy: *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity.”*

The Lord saw something in Gideon that Gideon didn’t see in himself. **The same is true for you.** As the Lord looks into your life, He will see more inside of you than you see in yourself. The Lord is with you.

And if God is for you, who can be against you? And the Lord spoke to Gideon and called him something that he didn’t feel at all about himself. The Lord said, *“You are a mighty warrior.”*

Now, as soon as God stirs in you and you start to sense He wants to do something great though you, almost every single time, your insecurities will rise to the top. All of the reasons why you are not the right person, and we see **two insecurities** rise to the top of Gideon’s life.

1. The first one was this. We see **Gideon was afraid that God wasn't going to be faithful.** Gideon was afraid that God's word was not going to be true. In Judges 6:13, Gideon says, "*But sir,*" *Gideon replied, "If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?*

Did you know that when it comes to perseverance there are **basic principles** that predict **if a person will give up in any given circumstance**? Principles that predict the perseverance and resilience of a person in a particular situation.

The first one is **TIMEFRAME**. How long is the situation going to last? I would guess Gideon thought it would never change, at least in his lifetime – it had already gone on for 7 years and it was getting worse not better.

Actually Gideon knew "*why has all this happened to us?*" God had sent a prophet who told them why. Verse 10, "*I am the LORD your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.' But you have not listened to me.*" The Lord had told them not to worship idols and they did anyway.

Gideon's knew why, but he is wondering about the character and the faithfulness of God, which, if we were honest, would admit we do the same thing. "*Lord, if Your word is really true, how come I have such a hard time believing it? Lord, when I pray, aren't You supposed to answer prayers, how come it seems like whatever I pray for doesn't happen?*"

"Lord, how come it seems like good people experience pain and the bad people get ahead? Lord, if You are really there, why is all of this happening?" Gideon, like so many of us, started to question the faithfulness of God.

2. Gideon was also afraid that **God wasn't good enough.** Watch what Gideon says. He responds and says, "*But Lord, how can I save Israel?*" (when the problem is so big.)

And here is the second principle of whether a person will give up or not. And that is **SCOPE**. What is the scope or size of the problem or circumstance the person is up against. And as far as Gideon was concerned what the nation of Israel was up against was huge.

He said, "*But, "My clan is the weakest, and I'm the least in my family."* The problem is so big and I'm so small. Do you ever feel like that? "*Lord, I'm the wrong guy, I'm the wrong gal. In case You didn't notice, I'm scared, and I'm insecure, and I don't feel like I'm good enough."* **Can you relate?**

You sense that God is calling you to do something, and all of a sudden, **you think of all the reasons why you are the wrong person.** *“Lord, I don’t know that much about the Bible, and my prayer life is not that great, and I don’t have great leadership skills, and don’t put me in front of people, because I’ll freeze every time, and I wasn’t at the top of my class.”* Insecure.

Ask yourself: *“What fear has kept you from doing what you know you should do?”*
“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of sound mind.”

God may have called you to share your faith with someone, but you are thinking, *“I don’t know if I can do it. I may say the wrong thing, and it may be the wrong time, and what if I mess it up?”* So fear keeps you from doing what you know God wants you to do.

So you are **paralyzed**, alone, afraid, wanting to reach out, but afraid to. Some may be at a spiritual crossroads and you know it’s time to take the step and give your life to Jesus. **You know it’s time.** You know what’s right, and yet, in the back of your mind, you are thinking, *“But if I do that, what are people going to say? What are people going to think about me at work?”*

Fear. *“For God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* so I pray today that the Spirit of God stirs you, and says to you, **“Not only am I with you,”** but there is a mighty warrior inside of you.

And when you hesitate and say, *“But, Lord, is there really a mighty warrior inside me? Can I trust You are telling me the truth? Lord, am I really good enough?”* And when your fear rubs against faith, which will win? I pray that faith conquers fear. Remember, that in **your** life, God wants to do **“The Gideon.”**

Now, maybe you’re thinking **“What is ‘The Gideon?’”** Is it a dance? No, it’s not a dance. **The Gideon is when God uses an unsure, insecure, and fearful person to do the impossible, to do what only He can do.**

Maybe you’re facing an impossible situation. Logic says this isn’t going to work out. The timeframe and the scope are too large. If that is how you feel, you are a candidate for God to do to a Gideon.

Two Gideon truths: The first one is this. Understand that with God, His strength through your weakness is enough. Verse 14, *“The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”*

The Lord is saying *“If I’m asking you to do something don’t you think I will equip you?”* If God is calling you, don’t you think He is going to give you the resources to get it done? Don’t you think He is going to deliver?

“Gideon go, I called you. You’re the one I chose. I see it in you. You are a mighty warrior. Go! **Am I not sending you?** Isn’t that enough?” *“Oh, but Lord I’m Not good enough.”* I know that story. I’ve been preaching for about eighteen years, and I still don’t feel good enough.

There was a time when I would get so nervous about speaking that I had decided I wouldn’t do it anymore, the nervous state I would get in wasn’t worth it. And I would think, *“Will the Lord see me though another Sunday? He did last week, but what about this week?”*

I mean, He might be busy, maybe He will be at some other church this Sunday. And here’s the deal, I know I’m not good enough, not spiritual enough, I don’t have anything to say that’s life changing. No mighty warrior here.

But then God takes my pathetic attempts and He does His thing and by the time the words get to you, they are not my words. To my amazement, **He personalizes** them for you.

And people sometimes tell me that message was so powerful and when you said “so & so” it hit me right where I am. And I think *“Wow, that’s pretty good – did I say that?”*

One time a fellow told me that a message three weeks ago was life changing for him. And I wonder what it was and I’m embarrassed to ask him what it was I said. I mean if it was that great I should remember it, right?

But, I prayed to the Lord to take away the extreme nervousness and He did. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says that God’s power is made perfect in our weakness. My weakness is a conduit for God’s strength.

So is yours. Where are you weak right now? It’s a perfect place for God to show up and do “The Gideon,” something that only He can do.

In verse 16, Gideon is still worried. *“The LORD answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.”* Judges 6:16. God said, *“We’ll do this together.”* When God is with you, it’s settled. No reason to be afraid. Have peace. If God is with you, He will get it done.

I was reading about a fellow in high school who was always **having problems** with the **school bully**. So he was always afraid because this bully wanted to beat the stuffing out of him.

But then a new fellow moved in who was a senior, his name was Mike, and he was the biggest baddest guy he had ever seen that was still in high school and he made it a point to become Mike's new best friend.

So he would go to a party and when the bully looked at him, he would say, *"I'm with Mike. What you looking at? I'm with Mike. You got a problem? Huh? I'm with Mike."* He didn't have anything to worry about.

But I have something better. **I'm with God**. God's calling me. God is my provider. He's going to make sure it gets done. God is my deliverer, my redeemer, my defender, my strength, my source and my righteousness. I'm with God.

We know we can do all things though God, but Gideon, like many of us, was struggling with this belief, and he says, *"Okay, I just want to make sure I have this right. You want to use me to lead Israel to defeat all of these bad guys."* And God says, "Yes, that's right." And Gideon said, *"Okay. Now I just want to make sure You are in on this, **please give me a sign.**"*

So, Gideon asked for this outlandish, impossible sign. And the Lord says, *"Okay, Gideon, I am going to show you,"* and God does, and Gideon can see, that it is God. ***"This is truly amazing. Wow! This must be You. But, just to be sure, will You give me another sign?"***

And God says, "Okay, here's another sign," and Gideon is seemingly convinced but before he actually did what God asked him to do God had to give him a third sign. Anyway, Gideon recruits an army to attack the Midianites, and he gets **32,000** volunteers. But they had to go against an army of **200,000** men.

Gideon is thinking, *"I need more people!"* But *"The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands." Judges 7:2*

2. What? Too many? That brings us to our **second Gideon truth**, and that is, ***"With God, the way forward is often backwards."*** Some of you might be experiencing this. *"Lord, I want You to take me forward. I want You to help my marriage, because it seems to be going backward. Please take it forward."*

“Lord, things are getting worse. Financially, I want to make some forward progress. Something just broke again. Lord, please help my kid. Give me some forward movement. My kid’s going the wrong way.”

Sometimes, with God the way forward is backwards, and you feel like, you want to see some forward movement, and yet, you continue to go backwards.

Ever shoot a slingshot as a kid? You shoot a bird? I hope not. Shoot a cat? Well, that’s okay. What do you do with a slingshot? What do you do before it goes forward? Go backwards.

Watch what God does. **This is an amazing story.** *“In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.” Judges 7:2-3. So twenty-two thousand men went home to mama.*

So, we are down to ten thousand people, and Gideon is saying, *“But, Lord, I thought we were going forward,”* and God says, *“We are. We are.”*

And then God says, **“We haven’t gone backward enough yet.** Tell the men to go drink out of the pond.” *Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.” Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.” Judges 7:5-6.*

The Lord told Gideon *“those who get down and drink like a dog, send those guys home, the ones who drank from their hands, these are the ones that you want.”* So now we are down to 300 against 200,000.

Verse 12, *“The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.”* and Gideon says, *“But I thought we were going forward,”* and Lord says, *“We are. We are.”*

These 300 guys must have had some pretty powerful weapons to go against 200,000 troops. Here are their weapons: *“Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.” Judges 7:16.* That’s it. They each had a trumpet, an empty jar and a torch.

And in the middle of the night this is what they did: *“Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they*

had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled." Judges 7:19-21

Caught by surprise they panicked. Vs 22, *"When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords."*

God sees something in you that no one else sees. He is with you, a mighty warrior, and as soon as you sense that, all of your insecurities may arise. *"What if it's not really God? What if, what if it's not Him? What if I'm not good enough?"*

God wants to do "The Gideon" in your life. At your point of greatest weakness, that's where His strength and His power will shine, and if you feel like things are going backwards, it may be just God's unusual way of taking you forward.

What about you? Are you hurt by a spirit of fear? Always worried, always concerned? Is it obvious you don't really trust God? Are you insecure, don't feel like you're good enough? The Lord wants to do "The Gideon" with you.

And maybe your prayer needs to be: *"Lord, help me overcome fear. I want to trust in You. Even when I am going backwards, Lord, I want to trust in You. Lord, break this spirit of fear over my life. I want to put my whole faith completely in You."*

You may feel like your life is sliding backwards. Maybe it is. Maybe it is because backwards for you is the way forward for God. Maybe He needs to get you to a place where you have nothing else but Him. **When you are down to nothing, God is up to something.** Maybe He is up to something in your life.

Lord, I pray that You would break the spirit of fear. We recognize that this is not from You. This is from the evil one. Break that. God, replace it with a Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Lord, build our faith in You, not in what we see, not in what we hear, not in the circumstances around us, but Lord, in You. **Build our faith in You.** Help us to see that the point of our greatest weakness is where Your strength is made perfect. Lord, help us to see Your Gideon truths, that sometimes for You, the way forward is backward. Even when we are going backward, may we trust in You. Lord, may Your strength, Your power be made perfect in our lives. Lord, build our faith so that we would always trust in You.