

If the Lord Be with Us, Why . . . ? (Judges 6:1-13)

An Expository Sermon

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INTRODUCTION

- A. Review the background of Judges 6:1-13.
 - 1. This occurred during the period of the Judges, soon after Israel settled in Canaan and at a time of many “ups and downs” in their lives.
 - 2. The Midianites oppressed them by coming into their new settlements and stealing their harvest.
 - a. This oppression lasted seven years (v. 1).
 - b. It was severe. They left no food, sheep, ox, or ass (v. 4).
 - c. The multitudes were as numerous as grasshoppers (v. 5).
 - d. Israel was greatly impoverished. Then they called on the name of the Lord (v. 6).
- B. The Lord responded to their cry and sent a prophet.
 - 1. He made an “I told you so” speech (vv. 8-10).
 - 2. The Lord then sent an angel to Gideon (v. 11).
- C. Consider this man Gideon.
 - 1. We first meet him while he is threshing wheat by the winepress. (This was the least expected place to find one threshing wheat, but the winepress enabled Gideon to hide it from the Midianites.)
 - 2. The angel announced he would deliver Israel (v. 12). Gideon was called a “man of valor.”
 - 3. Gideon had to be convinced! He was poor and humble (vv. 15, 16).
 - 4. He wanted to see a miracle (v. 13). He prepared food for the angel, and it was miraculously burned. He later saw signs: the fleece, small army, etc.
 - 5. He proceeded to pull down the altar of Baal and get into trouble.

6. He led Israel to victory.

- D. At the point of his selection to lead Israel, the angel assured Gideon that the Lord was with them. Gideon’s response is our study today. *“If the Lord be with us, then why hath this evil befallen on us?”* Gideon asked.
 - 1. Gideon voiced an almost universal question.
 - 2. In times of trouble we wonder where God is.
 - 3. Gideon’s philosophy: *Be good and God will send you physical blessings.*

I. SOME OBSERVATIONS ABOUT GIDEON’S QUESTION.

- A. Gideon’s philosophy is widely accepted today.
 - 1. A TV preacher said, “Something good is going to happen to you today.”
 - a. They are enthusiastic, upbeat, and convincing!
 - b. They often give testimonials. They tell of receiving letters which say, “I sent a contribution to you and that very week got an unexpected raise in salary,” or “I sent you a contribution and when I went shopping I found an unusual bargain,” or “I sent your program a contribution and my rich uncle died and left me a fortune.” (Did you ever wonder what would have happened if the person had sent a bigger contribution?)
 - c. These preachers imply that a person’s following them will solve all his earthly problems.
 - d. But when the blind follow the blind, troubles persist and infidelity follows.
 - 2. This philosophy appeals to the self-centered “me-generation.” It sounds good to those who are “this-world” oriented.
 - a. The popular thing now is to look out for “number one.”

- b. To find a short-cut to worldly success is exciting.
 - c. To believe this philosophy is like finding an insurance policy against failure.
- B. Gideon's philosophy contains an element of truth, but it does not consider the whole story.
1. God has promised and given physical blessings to those who trust Him.
 - a. He blessed the Jews when they obeyed Him (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2; 8:7-14; Exodus 15:26).
 - b. When one considers God's purpose for the Jews in the Old Testament, he sees that physical blessings were sometimes necessary.
 2. In the New Testament age we often receive physical blessings as a result of our relationship with God (Matthew 6:33; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).
 3. Special blessings came in the past, sometimes by miracle (as with Gideon), but God can still give them to us through natural processes.
 - a. He provides providential care.
 - b. He answers prayer (Matthew 24:20; 7:7; James 5:16).
 - c. His spiritual laws concerning a way of life bring blessings in and of themselves (Ephesians 6:2; Proverbs 11:25).
- C. That blessings come does not mean we will have no problems.
1. Old Testament examples of righteous men who received special blessings yet had major problems are Job and Joseph.
 2. New Testament examples are Lazarus, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Trophimus.
- D. Even though problems persist, Christianity does provide special help in times of trouble.
1. We have God to whom to pray.
 2. We have Christian friends to sympathize with us.
 3. We have hope for the future.
- E. We cannot fully understand the subject of human suffering.
1. If we cannot understand it, why study it?
 2. We do not fully understand God's ways (Romans 11:23), the love of Christ (Romans 3:9), or the peace of God (Philippians 4:7), but we learn all about them that we

can. It is the same with the subject of human suffering.

II. SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO GIDEON'S QUESTION.

- A. The Israelites may have brought this on themselves.
1. Israel has gone into idolatry. They were often oppressed during such times.
 2. We often bring on our suffering. (Four packs of cigarettes a day may cause emphysema; adultery may result in venereal disease; drunkenness may cause injury; theft may land one in jail; mistreatment of mate may bring divorce; etc.)
 3. This is not the only cause of suffering today, but if one could eliminate that which man brings on himself, he would greatly simplify the matter.
- B. The evil of someone else may have caused their suffering.
1. The Midianites were sinful people, and their sin affected those round about.
 2. The sins of others cause us to hurt!
 - a. A drunken driver may cause a wreck which takes the life of a husband and a father. That would deprive his children of an education or other helps in life. The harm may be passed down for generations. All of this can be caused by the sins of one man!
 - b. We bear the consequences, not the guilt, of the sins of others. Distinguish between guilt (Ezekiel 18:20) and consequences (Exodus 34:7).
 - c. The innocent often suffer for the guilty (1 Peter 3:18).
- C. God may have been allowing them to be put to the test.
1. He tested Abraham, Job (Job 23:10), David (Psalms 119:71); and He tests us (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12).
 2. They came out ahead, and so can we! (Romans 8:28; James 1:2, 3).
- D. God may have been chastening them.
1. He sometimes chastens us (Hebrews 12:7, 11).
 2. It is difficult to see good in chastening at the time it occurs . . . like in childhood.
- E. God may have allowed the problems so He

could have a channel by which He could greatly bless them.

1. Blessings came to the early church when they were persecuted (Acts 8:1-4).
2. Paul received blessings through adversity (Philippians 1:12).
3. Joseph is an outstanding example (Genesis 50:20).

F. Suffering sometimes comes to us because we live in a world of law and order.

1. We must realize that these laws are for our good, and when they are broken, we suffer.
2. A Christian is not exempt from the law of gravity, the heat of fire, the dangers of water, disease, decay, or death.

III. SOME QUESTIONS FOR GIDEON. (Gideon asked, "Why me?" Let us ask Gideon the same question in a different context.)

- A. The Lord paid a debt for me. Why me?
1. I was lost in sin (Romans 3:23).
 2. I owed the payment for it (Romans 6:23).
 3. Jesus died for me! (Hebrews 2:9; Ephesians 1:7).
- B. The Lord provides assurances for me. Why me?
1. He has promised physical necessities in Matthew 6:33.
 2. What a comfort! But why me?
- C. I have been adopted into the Lord's family (Ephesians 1:5). Why me?
1. I am a child of the King! (1 John 3:1).
 2. I have royal blood! Why me?
- D. I am going to inherit a fortune. Why me?
1. Read Romans 8:16-18; 1 Peter 1:4, 5.
 2. I have done nothing to deserve it.
- E. I am going to make a great and wonderful trip. Why me?
1. Jesus came down from heaven (John 6:38), has gone back, and is coming again for me (John 14:1-3).
 2. I am going to leave this world for another world! What a trip! But why me?

F. I am getting ready to move into a mansion (John 14:1-3). Why me?

CONCLUSION

- A. Yes, there are troubles, questions, problems, and suffering. We must endure. Christians are subject to these things, too.
- B. But God provides great blessings for His children. These are the things that really count.
- C. There are great joys to Christianity. All this, and heaven too!

ILLUSTRATIONS

Where You Would Rather Be

One evening when Thomas Edison came home from work, his wife said to him, "You've worked long enough without a rest. You must go on a vacation."

"But where on earth would I go?" asked Edison.

"Just decide where you would rather be than anywhere else on earth," suggested the wife.

Edison hesitated. "Very well," he said finally, "I'll go tomorrow."

The next morning he was back at work in his laboratory.

The Wrong Price

A prankster once broke into a fashionable store and switched the price tags on the merchandise. On articles of low value he placed high price tags, and on the truly precious things he placed ridiculously low price tags.

An observer who watched the proceedings remarked: "How true to life! So many of us have the wrong price tags on our values; and we are not even aware of it."