

Judges 6:1-21 – A Doubting Deliverer

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The first protectors of God's people, Othniel and Ehud, were remarkable. They obeyed God and rescued Israel from foreign control after they cried out for forgiveness. But this next deliverer had more difficulty in doing his job. He doubted God willingness and he doubted his own ability to save Israel when he saw the increasing power of Israel's enemies. Yet God would not leave Israel in sin for he loved them too dearly. He had to rescue them. But for God to rescue them he had to strengthen Gideon's faith – open his spiritual eyes. You will hear about this today.

Our headings:

Israel's Pollution and Punishment

Israel's Prayer

Israel's Protector

Our goals are: That **you will learn that your heavenly Father will punish his people when they sin, and that you will learn to trust him and boldly lead others out of the trap of sin.**

Pollution and Punishment

1 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD.

1. Israel did not defeat all the Canaanites as they should have. They were busy with their creature comforts and did not want to fight and risk injury or death. So **they inter-married with the Canaanites** and brought them into their homes. Then they **joined the Canaanites in worship.** With personal indulgence 个人放纵 in creature comforts came the **abdication 退位 of proper leadership.** At times women assumed the role of leadership for the people of God to survive. What a tragedy!

Henry wrote: **A child who has been burnt fears the fire, but God's people would not change.**" Most people learn from past experiences. But neither the goodness of God in the past, nor his severe judgment on the wicked Canaanites at present made Israel change their ways.

Leviticus 26:21 `Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. 24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and **I will punish you yet seven times for your sins.**

But while those 3 were the main sins, Israel added to those sins. They became worse.

...So the **LORD delivered** them into the hand of **Midian** for **seven years,** 2 and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the **dens, the caves, and the strongholds** which are in the mountains. 3 So it was, whenever Israel had sown 播种, Midianites would come up; **also Amalekites** and the people of the **East** would come up against them. 4 Then they would encamp against them and **destroy the produce of the earth** as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock 家畜 and their tents,

coming in as numerous as locusts蝗虫; both they and their camels骆驼 were without number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. 6 So Israel was **greatly impoverished**贫困because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.

2. So God, not Midian, punished Israel. God simply used the Midianites to do his work and they willingly did it. God used Midian as his whip鞭. God is punishing the church today because of her sins. It's not different!

3. Who were the Midianites? The Midianites were the descendants后人of Abraham and Keturah. They were defeated by Moses before, but the remnants who were scattered in other countries came and re-settled the land. The Midianites were the scum浮渣of the earth, uncivilized and unintelligent. They were friends with the Moabites. This made it more painful for Israel! Instead of being the head, Israel had become the tail尾. Instead of being as the sand on the seashore, Israel was struggling to survive. Whereas the Midianites, with all their males killed at one time, became as grasshoppers蚱蜢. They were joined by the Amalekites, who were descendants of Esau, and the people of Arabians.

4. The Midianites caused Israel to suffer for 7 years in an increasingly intense misery. In the past, Israel had taken tribute to foreign kings, but now they were hiding like animals ...in dens, caves, and strongholds in the mountains. They had to hide their food from the Midianites. Instead of using their oxen to tread踩 the grain, they had to hide and do it by hand. And whenever they were about to harvest, **these nations would come and destroy their crops or take what they wanted.** This was a common way Arabs terrorized恐吓their enemies. It was so bad that Israel did not have anything for sustenance for themselves or their animals. They robbed God of his tithe, God took it all away and gave it to their enemies. Israel became greatly impoverished.

But that was not how it was to be for God's people. Had they flown飞行to the Rock of Ages, there would have been no need to hide in the rocks of Canaan. Yes, they were hiding from the Lord, like Adam and Eve. They lost what God gave them!

Psalms 105:44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, And they inherited the labor of the nations,

Civil governments, schools, evolution, false religions...have all impoverished us. And we must confess our sins.

The Prayer

7 And it came to pass, when the **children of Israel cried out to the LORD** because of the Midianites, 8 that the **LORD sent a prophet** to the children of Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage束缚; 9 'and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 'Also I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.'"

1. After the intensity of the suffering for about 7 years, Israel finally called to the Lord for help.

When they were hiding in the caves, wasn't that reason to cry out to God for help? **Maybe they**

were hoping that their punishment was just some kind of coincidence巧合. This is what Christians often do when we don't want to face the reality of our sins. We try to think that the punishment is only accidental. This is why it seems that Israel only cried out because of the pain in their stomachs rather than the pain in their souls.

2. You can sense God's frustration in how he answered. He did not say: "I am glad you are sorry; I forgive you?" God sent a prophet to rebuke训斥 them for their sins. **They needed to focus on their sins.** Specifically, the Lord reminded them how good he was to Israel in the past, but they were ungrateful忘恩负义. And it was shameful that Israel continued to live in a backslidden退后 state for 7 years.

Yet, what marvellous forgiveness believers have from God! He forgave Israel because of his promise to Abraham of Messiah coming to save the world. Pray that, having been forgiven, and being daily forgiven, that you will fear God and flee from sin, as quickly as you sin.

The Protector

11 Now the **Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth**橡树 tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress酒榨, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "**The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor**勇气!" 13 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 forsaken离弃 us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "**Go in this might of yours,** and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" 15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan家族 is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." 16 And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man." 17 Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me.

1. Jesus Christ appeared under Gideon's father's terebinth tree. How do we know this was **the Lord Jesus? He is the only person of the Godhead who takes on human form. Also, Gideon later called him God.** But why did Jesus appear under a tree belonging to Gideon's father?

This showed that the Lord knew everything. He sees the little sparrow fall, and he sees you when you have your darkest saddest moments. He knew were Gideon was.

Then the Lord appeared to Gideon while he was hiding and threshing wheat in the winepress. Gideon might have been scared, thinking that the Amalekites or the Midianites had caught him. But there was no threat to him this time! He was meeting his God. He was chosen to be the protector of God's people. **The Lord spoke to Gideon and told him that he was with him.** Could God have saved Israel without him? Absolutely绝对. But God was pleased to use him.

2. Gideon's response was one of doctrinal ignorance教义的无知. He wanted to know if God were in control, why were all the terrible可怕 things happening to Israel. He wanted to know where the miracles were, where was God's mighty hand? Yet, the fact that God was punishing Israel was evidence that God WAS there and God WAS interested in them. So **Jesus did not even bother to**

address this issue raised by Gideon. He had not abandoned Israel. Israel had abandoned him. He always was with Israel, even as they went through the valley of the shadow of death! Jesus simply told him to get ready to deliver Israel.

Isaiah 52:12 For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard 后卫.

3. Gideon tried to excuse himself, like Moses before, claiming that his tribe was small and therefore ineffective 不灵, lacking in power and skill. Later, when the Father said: "Who will go for us to redeem the world?" Jesus responded, "Here I am, send me!" He never hesitated. He grabbed that human body and willingly gave his life for the world to redeem those who were trapped in sin.

4. The Lord simply reminded Gideon that he was with him and the Midianites would become like just 1 man. This meant that he need not fear. (Isn't this what Jesus said to his disciples when he gave them the command to go and conquer the world for him? **Jesus did not tell them how smart or skillful they were.** He simply strengthened them for the task and gave them the assurance that he would be with them always.

5. Then Gideon asked for a sign. He probably read the promises of God, but the Word had fallen to disuse 废弃. This is always the cause of weak faith: Disuse of God's Word.

But as Gideon heard the Lord more and more, his faith was strengthened. And he then asked for a sign to confirm his resurging faith. He didn't ask for a sign, hoping like the Pharisees to prove Jesus wrong. He asked for a sign for confirmation. Miracles were given to strengthen the faith of God's people! And he had faith. Hebrews 11:32.

18 "Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and **bring out my offering** and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back." 19 So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth 肉汤 in a pot; and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them.

6. Gideon asked Jesus to wait until he brought an offering to him. But this was not a fellowship sacrifice. He was not a priest to make sacrifices. Gideon wanted reassurance that he was speaking to God by asking him to perform a miracle.

Testing God isn't wrong. Do what God says and see if he would not do what he promised.

20 The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. 21 Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

7. Upon the Lord's direction, Gideon soaked the meat and bread with broth and touched the offering with the staff in his hand and fire came and consumed the offering. This work of God was surely enough to convince Gideon. This fire that consumed the bread and meat pictured how God would destroy the enemies of his covenant people.

8. What sign are you looking for before you work for the church to be restored to its prominent place in this world? God gave you the sign that a virgin would conceive and bear and Son whose

name would be Immanuel. You also have the sign of the resurrection 复活! Furthermore, you belong to the Lord now. He conquered your enemies on the cross. You belong to him. He is always with you. Now conquer for him! Bring back the straying!

Conclusion:

Israel fell back into pollution – increasing pollution, so God’s punishment returned – an increasing punishment. Then Israel called out to God and in his mercy, God sent a protector – a somewhat reluctant protector, to save them. When the protector was convinced that he could do what Jesus told him to do, he became ready to work for the kingdom.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. **God allows his people to suffer when they sin. He does this from love** so that they might come to their senses, repent, and return to the right path.

2. **God provides faithful leaders to do the task of calling his people repentance.** Those men must be faithful – in the home and in the church. So surround yourself with men of courage to challenge you. Marry a strong man.

3. **Your ultimate punishment for sins was not placed upon you, but upon your Savior Jesus.** He has fully paid for all your sins. He brought you out from spiritual bondage. As a leader, teach this.

Finally: The only one who can save you from your sins is Jesus. If you don’t have him as your Savior you will go to hell. He can become your Savior if you call upon him to save you from your sins since he took the punishment for the sins of the world.