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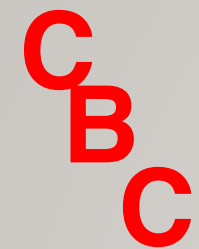
Min. Marossa Davis



Sunday Church School

JUNE 13, 2021

“Gideon Destroys Baal’s Altar”
Judges 6: 25-32



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Judges 6: 25-32

v. 25 “And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:

v. 26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

v. 27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father’s household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it



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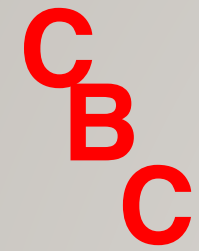
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Judges 6: 25-32

by day, that he did it by night.

v. 28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.

v. 29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

v. 30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.



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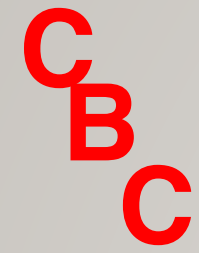
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Judges 6: 25-32

v. 31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar.”

v. 32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.”

Our first unit this quarter looks at four individuals from the Old Testament who undertook particular acts of courage. Heroes can be found in unlikely packages. One such person was Gideon. Hebrews 11:32 lists him among the heroes of the faith, but he did not possess many of the characteristics we normally associate with heroes. He was timid, unsure of himself and

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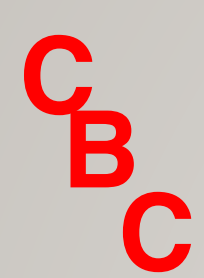


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repeatedly needed reassurance. Still, he mustered the faith to do what the Lord commanded him, and it was a key step in a much larger calling.

Perhaps you have found yourself in a position where you knew God was with you, yet you were still afraid. You believe all things were possible with God , and you rehearsed all the Scriptures that promise His protection and provision, but you were still afraid something might go terribly wrong. If you have experienced that, you are definitely not alone. Even some of the greatest heroes of the Bible had the same experience

The key to being faithful is not necessarily being fearless. It is trusting God to accomplish great things through you and going forward in spite of nagging doubts in your mind. God is not looking for people who are absolutely free of fear and doubt. He is looking for people who will trust Him in spite of them.



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TODAY’S AIM

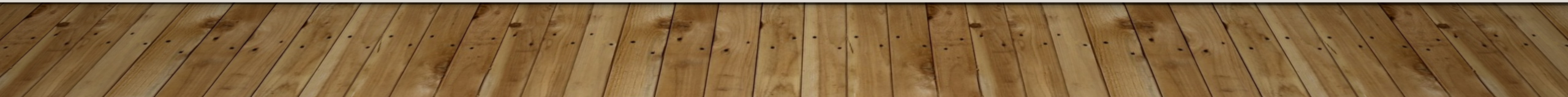
FACTS: to show that God is not looking for the strongest or bravest people in the world.

PRINCIPLE: to acknowledge that God can use even the weakest person who is willing to let God work in his or her life.

APPLICATION: to be assured that if we trust God in spite of our fears and misgivings, He will do great things in our lives.

LESSON OUTLINE

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| I. THE ASSIGNMENT | JUDGES 6:25-26 |
| II. THE ACTION | JUDGES 6: 27 |
| III. THE AFTERMATH | JUDGES 6: 28-32 |



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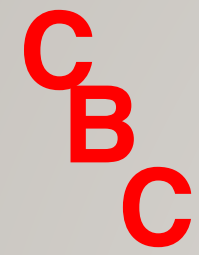
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I. THE ASSIGNMENT

JUDGES 6: 25-26

You may remember that we studied Gideon last year. This text is between the two better known accounts of his **call** to deliver Israel from the Midianites and the turning back of the large Midianite army (Judges 7: 9-25) The action in today’s passage takes place in **preparation** to the main event that follows, but it is a crucial step.

When the Angel of the Lord (a physical manifestation of the Lord Himself) delivered the commission to fight the Midianites, He had to overcome Gideon’s extreme doubt and hesitation. The Angel accomplished this by consuming a sacrifice with a fiery burst (6:21) and was then assuring Gideon he was in good standing (vs. 22-23) Gideon then did as the Angel had commanded and built an altar (tentatively accepting his commission or his assignment, it would seem.

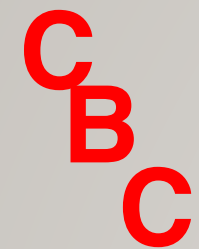


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God knew that Gideon, a humble resident of Ophrah was not yet ready to take on the task of leading an army against the enemy. Significant preparation was required to bolster Gideon’s courage, and more importantly, build his faith in the One who had called him and would be with him in this enterprise. So... God started him with a much smaller but nevertheless intimidating assignment.

Before God would have Gideon deliver Israel from the Midianites, he had him first purge the evil from his own home. The Lord did not waste any time getting him started on his training. That very night He spoke to him and set him before his first task. He was to take a young bull from his father’s herd—the second best one. This seven year old animal would be in its prime and this represent a significant sacrifice.



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As Gideon listened , he may have thought, so far so good, but this was merely the first step. The main task was about to be revealed and it must have sent a shiver down his spine. ” Tear down your father’s altar to the Canaanite god Baal, and cut down the Asherah pole standing next to it. This was not going to be easy.

That Gideon’s father had a Baal altar on his property is a sad commentary on how far the people of Israel had drifted from loyalty to the Lord. Baal worship was a key element of the evil that had brought on the Midianite oppression (v. 1). This idolatry had to be overcome before Gideon could make further progress.

Baal altars were often built in company with cult objects called Asherah poles (translated “ grove” in the KJV) An Asherah pole was a sacred pole (or

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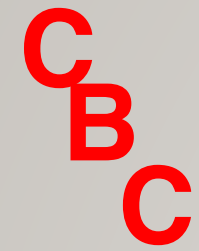
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sometimes a tree) that was used in the worship of the pagan goddess Asherah. (What was an Asherah pole? “ compellingtruth.org). Asherah was considered a fertility goddess and was probably also the one called the Queen of heaven (cf. Jeremiah 7:18; 44:27-19, 25). The worship before such object was blasphemous and immoral.

Deuteronomy 7: 5 commanded the conquering Israelites to break down all pagan altars and cut down all Asherah poles found in the land. That command had been overlooked. Gideon was assigned to rectify the people’s disobedience by carrying out both of these ordinances in the particular instance of his own family’s lapse.

The second part of Gideon’s task was to build an altar to the Lord, an altar for true worship. Baal altars were typically built on high ground, and it appears that Gideon was to build the Lord’s altar on the same elevated

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location that the Baal altar had occupied ‘ upon the top of this rock.” Once the proper altar was built (“ in the ordered place” suggests carefully laying the stones in the prescribed fashion), he was to sacrifice the young bull on it, burning the offering on the wood from the cut down Asherah pole.

II. THE ACTION

JUDGES 6: 27

The task Gideon was assigned to do represented a significant amount of work. Too much for one man. Gideon then selected ten household servants and set about to carry out the Lord’s instructions. Even with ten men around him, he was afraid of what his family and the men of Ophrah would do, so he did the work at night. Gideon fulfilled the task, but he was still along way from conquering his fear.

Gideon likely recruited the 10 assistants in the morning, but then waited until midnight to do the actual work. He and his men were able to finish

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it undisturbed, but the next days events showed that Gideon had good reason for his trepidation.

Does Gideon deserve criticism for giving in to his fear of the people and doing the job under the cover of darkness? We might assume that a public sin such as Baal worship should be confronted by a public refutation. A public destruction of an affront to the Lord’s honor and covenant afforded the opportunity for an open call to repentance and cleansing. It may seem to some that Gideon was hiding his candle under a basket (Matt 5:15)

If criticism is to be warranted, due credit is not to be withheld. Gideon may have carried out the assignment at night because of fear, but the more important fact is that **he did carry it out!** He obeyed God’s instructions, and he did not shortchange any element of those instructions. And he certainly calculated that if he had tried to do it in broad daylight, he would have encountered immediate interference from the whole town. He might have even been killed the spot, with the idolatrous altar left standing , its unlawfulness uncontested.

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Gideon also must have known that the cover of darkness would not shield him from eventual danger. He was subject to fears, but he was not a coward. If he had been, he would not have gone through with the task, or he might have left town immediately after, never to return. As future events revealed, Gideon’s seemingly cowardly act might have been an entirely reasonable and prudent course of action.

III. THE AFTERMATH

JUDGES 6: 28-32

Early in the morning the deed was discovered, the Baal altar and Asherah pole were gone and a new altar stood on the spot. Who has done such a thing? The impression is given of a whole town in an uproar with everyone shouting the same question. Who could possibly have a motive and ability to perform such an act? More inquiries were made, and soon the finger of accusation pointed to Gideon, the son of Joash.

Hand him over was the cry that went up. The whole town of Ophrah- all the men of the city- descended on Joash’s house and demanded that he turn his



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son over to them for punishment. It was a lynch mob, and nothing less than Gideon’s immediate death would appease them. They thought they were fully justified in such a demand, for Gideon had destroyed what evidently was of supreme value and importance, the altar of Baal and the Asherah pole.

Would Joash respond as Lot once had and seek to appease the crowd (cf. Genesis 19:4-8) , or would he stand his ground? We see in our lesson today that Gideon was not the only one out to the test on this occasion.

To his great credit, Joash did not allow himself to be cowed by the fury of the mob. Whatever culpability he may have borne for having had a Baal altar on his property, he now saw things clearly. Baal was not worth shedding anyone’s blood over, not to mention his own son’s.

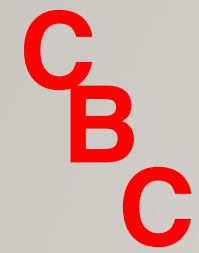
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Joash therefore answered the crowd with great courage, leavened by a healthy dose of keen irony.

He began by insisting that the people take a hard look at what they were doing. “ Why are you defending Baal?” Is the essence of the first question. They needed to consider why they were even on Baal’s side. They were Israelites- people who were in the land by the grace and intervention of the Lord. Why would they even think of taking up the cause of Baal?

Joash’s question became pointed. “ Will ye save him?” Did they think that by taking the action they were bent on, they were actually preserving the life of their precious idol? Joash answered his own question by bluntly insisting, “ Let him plead for himself.” If any action was to be taken against the person who destroyed Baal’s altar, Baal



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should be the one to do it. If Baal is as great as they seemed to think he, then he should be well able to defend his assaulted honor himself. Joash seemed to imply that they were in danger of impinging on Baal’s honor by usurping a task that should be his alone.

These words remind us of another confrontation between proponents of Baal and a lone defender of true worship. Almost 350 years after the mob scene in Ophrah, the prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and the wavering Israelites to let Baal make good on his claim over them (1 Kings 18: 21-24). It may be that Elijah had Gideon in the back of his mind when he proposed the contest. In any case, he had full confidence that Baal would be found completely wanting while the Lord would faithfully reveal His power and glory.



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It seems likely that Gideon’s act of faith stirred his Father’s conscience and awakened his spirit to the emptiness and evil of idolatry. If so, the Lord had already scored an opening victory in His work with Gideon.

The agitated men had no answer for Joash. At least none is recorded, and no harm came to Gideon. In fact, Gideon found that his reputation had been given a significant boost as a result of the confrontation. From that day forward, he had a new name : Jerubbaal. Verse 32 translates this as “Let Baal plead against him or alternatively, “ Let Baal defend himself.” Through all this, Gideon carried out a risky mission for the Lord and experienced his faithfulness both in enabling him to see it through and in protecting him from the expected

The logo consists of three red letters: 'C' at the top, 'B' in the middle, and 'C' at the bottom, arranged in a vertical stack.

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consequences. We know from what comes later in the episode of the fleece that Gideon still was not confident of his calling from God (vs. 36-40). The Lords’ expected hero would still need more preparation and encouragement, but he had overcome a major hurdle in the power of the Lord.

Our lessons this quarter focus on people who displayed courage in the face of great obstacles. The Bible records these deeds to remind us to imitate their example and to continue to walk by faith in our unchanging God. When people saw Gideon’s faith in action, they had proof of the impotence of Baal and the supreme power of God. The Lord had empowered Gideon and given him the victory. and the first place Gideon had to stand was in his own family.

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In conclusion, God never abandoned Israel although the Israelites had abandoned him. He simply allowed them to go the route they chose, but they had to suffer the consequences for it. We lose the blessings of God when we forsake the presence of God. We lose the protection of God when we choose to sin rather than obey Him. To love Jesus is to obey Him (cf. I John 2: 3-6). The Israelites stopped loving God when they began to worship Baal, but God was at work as they returned to Him and called on Him in their distress.

Gideon would later defeat the Midianites (Chap. 7) , but the greatest victory Israel had during his time as Judge was the conquering of Baal worship. Sin is a much greater problem for us than any enemy. The greatest victory we have in our lives is when Christ conquered sin on the Cross for us once and for all, securing our redemption and purchasing our forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1: 14).

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Practical Points

1. Obeying God may require bold and risky action. Judges 6:25
2. Consistent worship keeps our focus and commitment firmly centered on the Lord (v. 26).
3. God provides the support and resources needed to carry out His commands and fulfill His mission in the world (v. 27).
4. To follow the world's lead is to become God's enemy (vs. 28-29).
5. God never fails to show Himself strong on behalf of one who trusts in Him (vs. 30-31).
6. God gives victory to those who believe His promises and obey His commands (v. 32).

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For Further Discussion

1. How was Israel’s situation the direct result of disobedience to God’s commands (. F. Exodus 34:10-14; Deut. 7:1-6) ?
2. What challenges might Gideon have faced as a believer whose family worshipped Baal?
3. Gideon destroyed the altar at night “ because he feared his father’s household (v. 27). How can a believer know when to act boldly and when to be discreet?
4. How does the Bible prepare us to move forward in faith and obey difficult commands?

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