Why Did You Stop At The Cross?

The Army of Gideon

In judges chapter 6 there is the story of a man named Gideon who is hiding under a tree and behind a wine press threshing wheat. It says that he is hiding because he does not want the Midianites to find out that he has wheat.

While he is doing this an angel comes up to him and says, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Now, Gideon did not think of himself as a brave man or a man of war. Yet the angel tells him to take his “might” and go defeat the Midianites.

Gideon responds that he has no might. He says that he is the youngest member of the one of the smallest families in the smallest tribe of Manasseh. In fact Manasseh is only referred to as a half-tribe.

Yet the angel of the Lord tells him:
Judges 6:14
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 not I sent thee?"

Notice that phrase, “Have I not sent thee?”

Always remember that the Lord give us two things: talents/abilities and authority

1. Talents/abilities
    a. When the Lord gives us abilities we are free to do with them as we wish.
    b. When I was younger I was scared to death of speaking in front of people. I was terrified that the teacher would ask me to answer a question in class. Yet over time I developed my talent for speaking in front of groups. (I am still working on my ability to speak to individuals.) In fact I even worked up to where I would speak to groups as part of trade shows and corporate training exercises. I have this talent for putting concepts into words that some people can understand, so I would sometimes travel around the country doing trade shows where people would pay to hear me and others speak.

2. Authority
    a. To become a minister, however, requires more than talent; it requires authority as well. I literally had to go before a ministerial board and that board laid their hands on my wife and me. They gave us authority on behalf of God and behalf of the organization to speak the Words of the Lord.

You must have both ability and authority.

When the Lord asks you to do something, he has already given you both.

You have two answers that you can give: I will, or I won't.

You see there is no possibility of answering, "I can't" because you can.

The Lord has given you the authority and the ability. There is no question in his mind that you can do the thing that he has asked. To you it may seem like an impossible task, but the Lord has already worked it out.

Take Gideon, for example, he is certain that he has neither talent nor ability to defeat a mighty army like the Midianites. Yet the Lord sends him on this mission with the authority of God and the question, "Have I not sent thee?" The Lord has given Gideon the authority.

But what about the ability?

Where is the army? Gideon raises an army from the local people. Over 32,000 men arrived to help defeat this common enemy.

Now the Lord told Gideon, that there were too many people so he should reduce the number.

In the natural world this would seem like a stupid thing to do. The Midianites have a great army, why would anyone think that an army could be too big?

A large army represents strength. A large army represents security. But God said that they were too dependent on their own power.

Excuse me, God, but are you out of your mind?

Gideon follows the direction of the Lord and sends 22,000 men home, leaving him with 10,000. But the Lord says, "That is still too many."

Excuse me, God, but are you out of your mind?

At each point, Gideon has the ability to refuse God's command. He can say, "I will," or "I won't." He has the ability to send men away, so he can't say, "I can't."

So Gideon pares the number down again to 300. He gives those men a lamp and a trumpet. They surround the enemy camp, and look at what they do next:

Judges 7:20
And the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands to blow therewith, and they cried, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"

Notice the timing of this. God has pared down the army to a mere 300 men. Those 300 men give a shout of praise. They are not shouting because they have won the battle. Anyone can shout after you have won the battle. These men are shouting before the battle has even begun. Look at what happens:

Judges 7:21
And they stood every man in his place round about the camp, and all the host ran and cried and fled.

The battle was not won when 32,000 men showed up ready for battle.

The battle was not won when that number was reduced to 10,000.

Neither was the battle won when the final number was 300.

God had the battle plan in mind. God had the victory in His head, but all of these actions were performed as preliminaries. The tide turned for the army of Gideon when they shouted the victory and praised God before the battle even began.

When the army broke their lamps and shouted to God, that is when the enemy panicked and the battle was won.

The Battle of Jericho

Joshua came into the Promised Land with an army of people. They left Egypt as slaves, but in the course of 40 years in the desert they have been transformed into an army.

The first place they come to is a town called Jericho, which has mighty walls. In fact, the walls are so high and so thick that they even sell apartments in them. We know this because Rahab lived in one of them.

As these fighting men approached the City, they said, “OK God, where should we attack first? Should we attack the gates directly, or should we just cut off their supplies until they starve to death?”

The Lord said, “I want you to march around the outside of the city.”

OK, march around the outside. Good idea. Let them get a good look at us. It will also give us the opportunity to assess their defenses.

OK, God, we marched around Jericho yesterday; what should we do today?”

The Lord said, “I want you to march around the outside of the city.”

Again? OK.

For six days they went around the city. For six days, nothing happened. I am sure that the army was getting discouraged.

“For six days we have been marching around this city. It’s day seven, God. I suppose you want us to march around one more time?”

“No.”

“Really? Ok I’m ready to attack. Where should we start?”

“I want you to march around the city seven times.”

“I think you mean, ‘seventh time,’ right. Yesterday was the sixth time and today is the seventh. So you want us to march around a seventh time, right?”

“No, I want you to march around seven times today.”

So once again our heroes are presented with the same dilemma.

What do you answer God? Do you say, “I will” or “I won’t?”

Certainly it was not a problem with walking once they had marched around the city six times already. The choice presented to Joshua and the rest of the Israelite army was, “will I do what the Lord asks, or will I refuse?”

Sometimes when the Lord asks us to do things that make no sense to us, we refuse to answer His call.

Perhaps we even get discouraged or angry with God.

“God, I have been marching around this city day after day. You have not explained to me how this has any bearing on the battle. You are just making fun of me, aren’t you? You think that because you are God and I am not that you can play me for a fool? You are supposed to be helping me. Instead you are making me waste my time.”

But if we look at what Joshua did, we see how God wants this to work.
Joshua 6:20
So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets. And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they took the city.

The people did not shout because the walls came down; the walls came down because the people shouted.

There was no gradual shrinking of the walls with every lap around the city; when the walls came down they came down all at once. The walls came down after the shout of praise.

If you want Victory over your situation, you need to give a shout of praise to God. Your shout of praise is what causes God’s victory to occur.

Many of us say, “I will praise God the moment that he solves this problem for me.”

But the Bible clearly shows us that the Lord does not bring victory first and then hope that we shout praises; he brings victory after we shout praise.

Some of you have been waiting for the Lord to answer your prayer.

Maybe you may have been unemployed for a while.

You had a large army of George Washington’s waiting in your 401K. But like Gideon’s army yours keeps dwindling away.

First you lose a big chunk due to taxes, and then no matter what you do there always seem to be another bill to pay.

Your once mighty army of money is getting smaller and smaller.

Or maybe you are like Joshua at Jericho.

You have been walking in circles over and over again. You have been trying to do what the Lord asks but you feel like nothing is getting accomplished.

You feel like you are just going in circles and the Lord is sending you around and around without any concern for actually solving your problem.

The Lord is here today to tell someone that the time for reducing your army is over.

The time for going in circles is past.

The victory is all set but you need to shout some praise.

You won't see the victory that is set to come in your life.

To you everything seems as bleak as it ever has, but the Lord has arranged for a great victory.

He needs you to cause that victory to happen.

You need to get up out of your seat and shout for a victory from the Lord.

The Battle of the Cross

Jesus had a really bad day. He was put on trial by the Jews.

He was handed over to the Gentiles and beaten so severely that most people would not have survived.

Then he was handed over to the Jews again in the form of Herod where he was ridiculed some more.

Then the Gentiles humiliated him by taking off all of his clothes hanging him on a cross specifically so that everyone could see him.

Yet many of us endure the embarrassment that the Devil has put on us and we stop.

We refuse to go on.

We say that if the Lord wants me to be on the cross then that is where I will stay.

If the Lord wants to humiliate me then so be it, but do not ask me to thank him for it.

The Lord asks us to give praise, and we have the option we always have: do we say, “I will” or “I won’t?”

Matthew 27:50
Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Matthew 27:51
And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked and the rocks rent.

Jesus did not shout because the earth quaked; the earth quaked because he shouted with a loud voice.

The shout of praise is what completed the victory.

On November 7, David Brian said, “There can be no victory without the cross.” I am here to tell you that if you stop at the cross, you will never go on to victory.

Why did you stop at the Cross?

Some of you have been struggling for too long in your job, your marriage, whatever.

You feel like the struggle has been futile.

You wonder why you even bother coming to church if there is no victory.

I am here to tell someone that the Lord has prepared your victory.

You need to stand and shout to the Lord to cause that victory.

There is not victory in the cross; the victory is in the resurrection.

The resurrection comes after the shout.

Why did you stop at the cross? Why won’t you shout for that victory you’ve been praying for?