

Hiring A Mercenary

Judges 6:13-15 (KJV)

13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. **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? **15** And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.

Most of you are familiar with this passage in the Bible. In Judges 6, Gideon is approached by an angel and told that he will be the one who will drive out the Midianites. Gideon objects at first, because he does not see how this can be done. The angel calls him a “mighty man of valor,” but Gideon doesn’t see himself as mighty or valorous. He also starts listing to the angel all the reasons why he cannot help the people with the Midianites:

First, he is a member of the tribe of Manasseh. Remember that in Numbers, the tribe of Manasseh asked Moses if some of them could remain on the other side of the Jordan River. Moses gave them permission, but only if they agreed to help their brethren conquer the Promised Land. Thus, only half of the tribe of Manasseh lived in the Promised Land. That made them the smallest of all the tribes in the Promised Land. Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh, so he was already at a disadvantage with respect to the political influence he would need to try and convince the other tribes to go into battle with him.

Secondly, he is the youngest member of his father’s house. Inheritance and influence in a family is determined by the order of your birth. The oldest son automatically got twice as much inheritance as the rest of the boys. What wealth he did not inherit he got to influence, because the oldest son could boss around his younger brothers. This influence went down the line so the youngest brother was usually the most picked on and least respected in the family. Gideon was the youngest member of his family.

Lastly, he says that his family is poor. Money means privilege. Rich people tend to get rich because they have something that other people want. Rich people are used to people coming to them. Rich people hang out with other rich people. Rich people send their kids to better schools where those kids grow up with other rich kids. When those rich kids grow up, they hang out with their rich friends. Money means influence. Influence is what you need if you want to convince other people to go to war with you.

But I think there is something else at play as well when Gideon says that his family is poor in Manasseh. It was not uncommon for rich people in those days to pay for the raising of an army by purchasing weapons, armor, horses, food, and anything else that the army needed. ("An army marches on its stomach," said Napoleon Bonaparte). Sometimes it was just as important to not only buy the weapons, but to pay trained soldiers to use those weapons. You cannot take farmers and expect them to be soldiers overnight. Sometimes to win your war you need to hire a mercenary.

David as Mercenary

Now if you look in the Bible for the mercenaries, you will find that they are often looked on with contempt:

Jeremiah 46:20-21 (KJV)

20 Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. **21** Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation.

The Bible tends to look down upon the mercenaries for two reasons:

God wants us to rely on him. Gideon didn't need mercenaries, because God raised up a small group of Special Forces to battle the Midianites.

Mercenaries are usually in it just for the money. They will fight your battle while you are paying them, but if the cost of the battle gets too high they may abandon you. That is what God is saying about Egypt's mercenaries in Jeremiah 46:21: they will abandon Egypt when the battle gets too hard. The other danger is that a mercenary may turn on you and join your enemy if they can get more money

from the other side. We see this when David was working as a mercenary for Achish, the king of the Philistines.

1 Samuel 28:1-2 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. **2** And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

David and his men were working in the army of Achish. Saul, the king of Israel, was out to kill David. That made David an enemy of the State, so he sold his skills as a warrior to someone who could see his value. David fought Achish's wars and was even made a member of his personal body guard. This was all well and good until Achish decided to go to war with Israel. Now David must make a choice: does he stay with his employer, or does he fight with his kinsmen?

Each of us act as a kind of mercenary to others. We are given talents by God when we are born and again when we are filled with the Holy Ghost. But just as God allows us to keep 90% of what we earn and only give 10% back to him, so it seems that he allows us to use the talents he gave us for our own purposes. We are soldiers in the Lord's army, but we can sell ourselves as mercenaries to our employers. If you are skilled with administration, you become your company's administrator. If you are good at talking to people, maybe you become a car salesman.

When you use your talents for worldly purposes, it can help to keep you in practice. Any military commander will tell you that you never want to allow your troops to be idle. Idle soldiers get into trouble and lose their skills. (The sphinx at Giza has no nose because bored French troops shot it off.) But by using your talents at your employer, you keep your talents sharp. You learn new tricks and techniques. You stay in practice.

What happens when your employer asks you to go to battle against your family? What happens when they want you to march into battle at their side against your beliefs? Your employer should be scared to death that you will turn on them.

1 Samuel 29:4 (KJV) And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?

Most of us live in a world where we need to act as mercenaries. We have been filled with the Holy Ghost and empowered to perform work in the Kingdom of God. Yet because the Kingdom of God is not fully come, we have to sell some of those God-given talents to the World. But each of us must remember that our loyalty must first be to the One who gave us those talents.

Baron von Steuben

In the winter of 1777, George Washington and his men were camped at Valley Forge. The winter of 1777 was especially brutal, but it was made all the worse because most of the men did not have proper clothing for even a summertime war. Many of them were without shoes or coats. Rations were in short supply. Most of them had been farmers just months before and had no idea how to operate in an army.

For example, when an animal died or was killed, the men would strip the meat and then just leave the carcass to rot in the open wherever it lay. There were no designated latrines, so the men would relieve themselves wherever they wanted. Tents were strewn about in random locations. The men didn't even know how to use their equipment; most of them only used their bayonets as a cooking tool.

Ben Franklin found a Prussian named Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben or "Baron von Steuben" in Europe. Ben Franklin sent the man to Valley Forge to help get the Continental Army in shape before the fighting started up again in the spring. Baron von Steuben instituted training and standards that were still being used by the US Army over a century and a half later:

He arranged the camp in orderly rows with commanders, officers, and enlisted men separated into ranks.

He put the camp kitchen on one side of the camp and the latrines on the opposite side of the camp. The latrines are always downhill from the kitchens.

He taught the men how to march and follow orders. He taught them how to use their weapons. He taught them how to fight without weapons. He taught them how to use the bayonet as a weapon rather than just a skewer to hold some meat over the fire.

He started with training men how to function as a soldier, then how to function in a squad, then the regiment. He instituted the idea of Sergeants being responsible both for the training and the command of enlisted men.

By the spring of 1778, the Continental army was different than the one that went to Valley Forge in 1777. For example, on July 16, 1779 the Continental Army under General "Mad Anthony" Wayne (the man for whom Wayne County is named) defeated the British at the Battle of Stony Point. The men conducted a night-time raid using only bayonets; they intentionally did not load their rifles so that the sound of gunfire would not alert the British to their presence. In a year and a half after von Steuben's arrival in the US, the Continental Army went from one that didn't even know how to use a bayonet to one could win a decisive battle using nothing but bayonets. Sometimes you need a mercenary to come in and help you with your battle.

True Believer Mercenaries

Baron von Steuben's influence cannot be understated in the American Tale of Independence. Most mercenaries are both loved and feared because their loyalties can be bought and sold. Von Steuben was different because he didn't sell his services for money; he was a true believer in the idea of freedom. Von Steuben offered his services free of charge to the Continental Army. He didn't teach the men at Valley Forge how to fight because the Americans were offering more money than the British; he did it because he believed in the cause.

God asks each of us to be willing to fight the battles that need fought even though we may not get paid anything. The world is full of people who are under attack but they are not equipped to fight. They may be untrained, unskilled, or just

overwhelmed with superior firepower on the other side. Their defenses are weak and they will be overrun by their enemy if someone doesn't jump in to help.

This week I have been dealing with my cousin's daughter. Corrine is a 19-year-old girl that, frankly, I didn't even know existed until this week. Last Sunday afternoon I got a call from my sister that my cousins and my uncle were all very upset because Corinne was going into surgery to have a kidney removed due to a form of cancer so rare that the doctors haven't even seen a case of it since 1974.

Corinne lives in faith (as best she understands it), but what concerned me most was that she was standing alone in her spiritual fight. You see my cousin and Corinne's mom never got married. My cousin is Catholic by being baptized that way when he was an infant, but he does not practice the faith. Corinne's mom is a devout atheist. My other cousin and his wife (Corinne's aunt and uncle) are both nurses; they immediately became distraught when they heard the diagnosis. My uncle (Corinne's grandfather) is a deacon in the Catholic Church, but he found himself unable to demonstrate any spiritual leadership.

As she was heading into one of the scariest times in her entire life, the army that should have been standing with Corinne in this fight took one look at the enemy and collapsed. During a single afternoon that whole section of my family lost its faith.

Another cousin's son saw this happening and reached out to my sister. They threw out a spiritual distress signal, because he was afraid of the way the entire family collapsed before the battle even began. My sister sent me a long text message last Sunday afternoon telling about all the drama. I replied simply, "How many of them can you get to church tonight?" She needed an army to pray for her and to wage a war in the spirit. Her enemy sent out its Goliath and her army took one look and ran to their tents shaking in fear. I told them, "I know a place where we can get some mercenaries."

So, last Sunday night my sister Catherine and my first cousin once-removed Ryan came to church here. They came to the altar and we anointed a prayer cloth for Corinne. My sister drove down and gave Corinne the prayer cloth just as she was going into surgery. When she came out of surgery, she was in ICU still clutching that cloth in her hand. The surgery itself took several hours longer than they

thought, because the doctor could only find one tumor; she could not locate the other tumors that were on the x-ray films they took a few days before.

But I am not worried about Corinne. The most dramatic change so far has been in the people around her. Her mom, the devout atheist, is not quite so adamant about there not being a God as she was before. My cousin, who has never had a close relationship with the Church let alone God, is suddenly asking for advice on where he should go to church.

When a potter works with clay, he shapes and molds it into the shape he wants. If he cannot get the clay to conform, he might just throw the clay away and start over. I know that the Lord does that with our lives sometimes as well; if we won't allow him to shape into what he needs us to be, then he might just throw away the life we have and start over. I wouldn't be surprised if God hasn't used this disease as a way of breaking up the existing routines so that he can bring a new revival into my family.

Lift Each Other's Burdens

I also want to thank this church for being the kind of church that would stand in the gap for others. As Paul said,

Galatians 6:2 (KJV) Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

It is in the waters of baptism in Jesus' Name that each of us have our sins washed away. It is through baptism that we become eligible for service to the Lord. But it is through the infilling of the Holy Ghost that we are given power. It is through the Holy Ghost that we are given our sword, shield, rifle, and bayonet.

Each of us are equipped with what we need to do battle. Baron von Steuben equipped each soldier as an individual, and then he trained each soldier how to be an individual. Each of us are equipped as an individual soldier for the Lord and equipped as an individual.

But von Steuben followed up that individual training with group training. He taught the soldiers how to work in squads. He taught the squads how to work in platoons, companies, battalions, regiments, and so on. So, the Lord wants us to

work together as a team. Some days we may need to work as a squad, but other days the Lord may call out an entire regiment of us for spiritual warfare.

Be Each Other's Mercenary

Just as Gideon found himself called upon to fight the enemy on behalf of Israel, we will be called upon to fight against the enemy today. Our church, our families, our world needs us to fight for them. And we, like Gideon, may feel like we are too small, too weak, or too poor for the job. We may not feel equipped, because the enemies seem so great. But we have been equipped by God with the power of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 8:37 (KJV) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Gideon felt as if he needed to hire mercenaries, but God had called him to be the mercenary to the other tribes. He had all he needed in God. Likewise, when called upon to do battle, we can be sure that we have all we need in Him to fight whatever battle He sends us to fight. Corinne's cancer is too much for me, but not too much for God.

Your friends at work may have failing marriages, or financial burdens may seem too much for them, but not for God. They may not have an army surrounding them that can hold back the advancing hordes of evil spirits. They need us. They need you to be the hired soldier, the mercenary, to do battle on their behalf.

"People sleep peacefully in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." – Richard Grenier

Sometimes we need to be those "rough men" who do violence in the spirit on behalf of others.