

THE STORY OF GIDEON: PART III

“Lamborghini”

Last Sunday, Gideon had found what it means to have the peace of Jesus Christ in your heart. We could see this in his building of an altar to honor God and then naming the place, **“Yahweh-Shalom**—which means **“the Lord is peace.”** And once that peace resides in your heart, you can do things for God that you never thought were possible. No longer will you have to make excuses for not doing them. Rather, when the Holy Spirit enlists you to do something, you can move forward with great confidence—knowing that whatever it is that He calls you to do, He will be right by your side all of the way. And as we move on in Judges 6, we can see that God had something that He wanted Gideon to do.

After the sun went down on that day Gideon built that altar to the Lord, the Holy Spirit commissioned Gideon to do something quite risky, as it turns out. The Scripture tells us: ²⁵ That night the LORD said to him, “Take the bull from your father’s herd, as well as a second bull, one that is seven years old. Pull down your father’s Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole. ²⁶ Then build an altar for the LORD your God on the top of this stronghold according to the proper pattern. Take the second bull and offer it as a burnt sacrifice on the wood from the Asherah pole that you cut down.”

Judges 6:25-26 (NET1)

Let’s pause here for a few brief explanations of some of the things referenced in these verses. First of all, who is this Baal character supposed to be? Well, he was the Canaanite god of fertility who was noted for riding around in thunderstorms and providing rain to crops.¹ Baal’s mother was the fertility goddess named Asherah. Usually, wherever you found an idol of Baal, right beside it would be a tall wooden post—known as an *“Asherah pole”* installed symbolizing Baal’s mom as well.² And notice that the Lord directed Gideon to take two of his father’s prize bulls to go on this mission. These bulls had in all likelihood been set aside by Gideon’s father especially for use in sacrifices to Baal. And, it is significant that he needs to take two bulls with him. Apparently, these idols were so massive that it required the strength of two large bull oxen just to pull them down.³

Now, just think about the enormity of this task, and what was at stake here. If we were to convert this story to modern times, it would be like God asking Gideon to trash his father’s Lamborghini. For those of you who don’t have a Lamborghini in your garage back home, let me explain. A Lamborghini is an Italian super-sports car and if you are thinking about buying one, their price tabs start at around \$200,000 and go up to about half a million dollars. So it would be comparable, in a sense, to God was telling you, when you were a young man or woman, to go out to your dad’s garage and,

without him knowing it, fire up his Lamborghini, and then take it to the edge of a 100' high cliff and roll it off of the top just so it would be totally destroyed as it crashed to the bottom. And to make the comparison a little more accurate, pretend that all your dad's neighbors had a stake in this because they too had contributed money to buying this Lamborghini and would occasionally take turns riding around in it. Think about how that would have gone over with your dad and his neighbors when they found out that you were responsible for rolling everyone's treasured Lamborghini to the top of the cliff and pushed it over the edge. They would have been outraged and would be looking to throw you over the cliff as well.

Now this comparison is actually a little closer to being accurate than you might think. You see, the logo that is stamped on most any Lamborghini sports car happens to be that of a golden, snorting bull. And guess what animal was closely associated with Baal-worship. You got it—it was a fierce bull.⁴ Not only that, but anyone owning two bull oxen, like Gideon's dad did, would be considered about as rich as a Lamborghini owner today.⁵

Alright now, Gideon has his instructions, so what is he going to do? Is he going to cower down and hide like he did in the first few verses of this 6th chapter of the Book of Judges, or is he going to actually do something? Well, let's see. Starting with verse 27, it tells us: ²⁷ So Gideon took ten of his servants and did just as the LORD had told him. He was too afraid of his father's family and the men of the city to do it in broad daylight, so he waited until nighttime. ²⁸ When the men of the city got up the next morning, they saw the Baal altar pulled down, the nearby Asherah pole cut down, and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar. ²⁹ They said to one another, "Who did this?" They investigated the matter thoroughly and concluded that Gideon son of Joash had done it. ³⁰ The men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, so we can execute him! He pulled down the Baal altar and cut down the nearby Asherah pole." ³¹ But Joash said to all those who confronted him, "Must you fight Baal's battles? Must you rescue him? Whoever takes up his cause will die by morning! If he really is a god, let him fight his own battles! After all, it was his altar that was pulled down." ³² That very day Gideon's father named him Jerub-Baal, because he had said, "Let Baal fight with him, for it was his altar that was pulled down."

Judges 6:27-32 (NET1)

What an amazing difference we see here in Gideon. His encounter with the "angel of the Lord" (who we know to be Jesus), and the "peace of the Lord" that he had come to experience, had produced what appears to be the beginnings of a new Gideon. Although he was not completely fearless, he had now at least become a man of action. He was a man who no longer stood by while the world around him engaged in unholy idol worship. Notice the many things that this short passage teaches us.

First, notice that Gideon went about his task of destroying these idols at night. Was he still a coward for waiting to act under the cover of darkness? Well, verse 27 does say that Gideon was too afraid to act during daylight. And yet, someone once said that, "***Courage is not the absence of fear; rather it is the ability to take action in the face of fear.***"⁶ And to that extent, we might want to give Gideon the benefit of the doubt, because he had enough faith to move forward with God's appointed task despite his fears. And although we are told that he was afraid they'd catch him in the act if he went about this in broad daylight, that might not necessarily indicate the fear of a coward as much as the fear of failure. For certainly Gideon must have realized that if he proceeded in open view during the light of day, he would have been detained before succeeding in his task. After all, it takes quite a while to hook up a couple of bulls to a big ole Baal statute and pull it down. All those Baal worshipers loitering around were unlikely to just stand by while Gideon did that. And, think about this also: The fact that he used 10 servants to assist him indicates that Gideon knew that word would likely get out that he was responsible for this idol-dumping act. So it isn't quite fair to brand his actions in going forward at night as being cowardly. In fact, it could be argued that was he was prudently led by the Holy Spirit. After all, Jesus told His own disciples that in accomplishing their Gospel mission that they would need to be "as cautious as snakes and as gentle as doves."⁷ And so, Gideon provides a good lesson in what it means to take action for God even in the face of your fears, and reminds us that the Holy Spirit will guide you in accomplishing what God sends you out to do.

A second thing that this story teaches us is just how important our actions for God can really be. The things that we do in the name of Christ can influence others—even those whom some might think are beyond redemption. We can see this readily enough when we consider Gideon's father, Joash. Joash had been one of the ring leaders in Baal worship. But, when he saw how his son, who had apparently never shown any inclination to take a stand on anything before this, now acted courageously in pulling down the town-folks' favorite idol—well, Joash was greatly moved. In fact, from all indications, he was the very first person to abandon Baal and came back to the God of Israel.⁸ Never underestimate how much your actions might catch the eye of someone who is teetering on the fence—ready to come to faith in God or fall back into whatever Baal may be seeking to entrap them. The things that you do can influence them to rethink things and come to God.

But, I think that the greatest lesson in this passage of Scripture pertains to our attraction to idols. It teaches us to be careful what we love the most in this life, because before you know it you may find that you are bowing down to those things like idols. Now, when that happens, it is sometimes quite obvious that those who are doing the bowing are making an idol out of things that are definitely

evil—like bowing down to actual satanic idols as cult members or wiccans may do with some pagan symbol. But, more frequently people unwittingly bow down to idols by getting their priorities out of order. The things they bow down to as idols—well, they are not necessarily evil, in and of themselves. More often than not, these people engage in idol worship in a more subtle way and don't even realize it. For example, some worship wealth. Some worship their jobs and careers. Some worship positions of power. But, nothing is inherently wrong with any of these things **until they become idols**. There are even things that people bow down to, as if they were idols, and those things are usually considered to be good in nature—things like our families, our spouses, our hobbies, and our homes. So what is the problem here?

Well, as I mentioned, it is one of priorities involving the things that we love—and, surprisingly, it has nothing to do with our **lack of love**. In fact, did you know that human beings are the most loving creatures that have ever existed on this planet? That's been true right on down from the time of Adam through today. People can never be accused of lacking in love. The problem is not our ability to love—we have plenty of capacity for that. The real problem is **the things that we dedicate our love to**. Tim Keller, in his book, *Making Sense of God*, points out that St. Augustine may have expressed this problem of ill-directed love as well as anyone. Augustine said: ***"A just and good person 'is also a person who has [rightly] ordered his love, so that he does not love what it is wrong to love, or fail to love what should be loved, or love too much what should be loved less (or love too little what should be loved more.'"***⁹ Ultimately, what Augustine was saying is that all sin is what might be described as **misdirected love**. Applying this rationale to our lives today, consider a few of the things that people **love**. We love our work. We love our families. We love making money. And thankfully, a good many people still love justice. These are all among the good things of life to love that I spoke of earlier. But, when we get our priorities out of order regarding the things that we love, then great problems emerge. Keller explains: ***"There is nothing wrong with loving your work, but if you love it more than your family, then your loves are out of order and you may ruin your family. Or if [someone loves] making money more than [they] love justice, then [they] will exploit [their] employees, again, because [their] loves are disordered. . . [And, because of this,] you are what you love."***¹⁰ So how does this disordering of our "loves" equate to sin? Borrowing a thought from the Apostle Paul¹¹, Augustine would answer that question this way: ***"[We] sin when, neglectful of order, we fix our love on the creature, instead of on thee, the Creator."***¹² Jesus gave an even better answer when He said: **"For your heart will always pursue what you [love] as your treasure."** Matthew 6:21 (Passion New Testament) The Bible is clear on what your priorities have to be.

What are the two top priorities? The top priority is this: “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” And the second priority is like unto it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹³ When the love of your heart is prioritized in that way, nothing in your life can be misdirected. God will provide for you in a way that you’ll be able to overcome any of your fears. And your actions will not fail, nor will they go unnoticed.

Last Sunday, just about the time that we were wrapping up our worship service, a man named Allen Wilson demonstrated this. He showed by his actions, and later by his words, what it means to love God, love people—and to do so despite whatever fears and limitations confront you. Allen Wilson is a Captain with the Nash County Sheriff's Department. But, last week, he was off-duty enjoying his vacation at Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, and was there on the beach with his wife and son. At that time, the water was extremely rough off the coast of North Carolina, and as he lay there on the beach he remembers telling his wife that, “If anybody gets in trouble, Lord knows, I’m going to have to help them.” And it wasn’t long after he said that that his statement was put to the test. He saw a 12-year old girl out in the ocean on a float about 100 yards away. Suddenly, a wave hit and capsized the float, sending the girl into the rough waves. She tried to swim back to the float, but it was clear that she’d never make it. Now, Captain Wilson is not a particularly good swimmer. By his own admission, he can barely swim the length of a standard swimming pool. So, in considering what to do, he must have certainly had his own fears. But, he also knows the Lord and trusts daily in God’s strength. So, he called out to his son to bring him one of their boogie boards. And as he ran into the waves, he snatched up one of those pool noodles that “just happened” to be floating there at the edge of the water. Wilson was able to get to the girl, who was, by then, both panicking and totally exhausted. And, using the boogie board and pool noodle as a make-shift life raft, the two of them tried desperately to swim back to shore. But, the current was so strong and they were getting nowhere. He later recounted, “You could feel the current pulling us out. By this time I was already getting pretty exhausted. So I knew if we could just (get close) enough, one of the waves would pick us up, and it did, thank the Lord, and we were able to get a little closer and a little closer [to shore]. By the time we got to shore she was completely out of energy and I was gassed.” When asked how he managed to overcome his fears and gather his strength to execute this unlikely rescue, this is what he said: “Honestly, if I had not seen that [pool noodle and boogie board that] I was able to use [as a] that flotation device, I don't think I would have made it back myself. . . I just feel it was God who put me there. And God gave me the tools to be able to use. . . I’m not a hero, I don't claim to be a hero. I’m someone who was in the right place at the right time and was able to be used [by God].”¹⁴

Just as God gave Gideon the courage to act, despite his fears and his obvious lack of tools, he gave Captain Wilson courage and strength as well, and supplied him with the needed tools to accomplish his task. There are a lot of people out there drowning spiritually. And, the fortitude that God gave to Gideon and to Captain Wilson, he will give to you to help them as well. But He will do that only if you have your priorities straight. The loves of your heart must be in the right order. What is the love of your heart?—the thing that you love the most?—the thing that you give first place to? If it is anything other than God—if Jesus doesn't take priority over whatever else you may love—then you too are bowing down to Baal. If so, you need to pull that idol down, or at least remove it to a place that is subordinate to Christ. It may not be easy to do. It may feel like it would take the strength of two bulls to pull your personal idols down, but you can do it, if you truly want to. If you will submit all to Him, God will help you do it because He loves you so much. Trade in the Lamborghinis that you may be worshipping. Trade the things of creation for the Creator of all things. Come as you are—God accepts a repentant heart, for no one is beyond redemption. You are of great value to Him. You are God's Lamborghinis—so be Lamborghinis for Christ with the Holy Spirit under your hood, and the emblem of the Cross on top. You can leave all your fears behind—put the peddle to the metal and leave them in the dust. Will you do that? In today's passage from the Book of Judges, we can see that Gideon was moving in the right direction. Can the same be said for you?

Let us pray.

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Darvin Satterwhite, Pastor
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¹ James Newell, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), s.v. "BAAL," WORDsearch CROSS e-book.]

² James Newell, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), s.v. "ASHERAH, ASHERIM or ASHEROTH," WORDsearch CROSS e-book.]

³ *NET Bible*, 1st ed. (Richardson, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 1996), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 6".

⁴ Frank E. Gaebelin and Richard P. Polcyn, ed., *Expositor's Bible Commentary, – Deuteronomy – 2 Samuel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 421.

⁵ Lawson G. Stone, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Joshua*, (Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale, 2012) 276.

⁶ Nancy Anderson, <https://www.selfhelpdaily.com/quotes>.

⁷ Matthew 10:16 (TEV) "Listen! I am sending you out just like sheep to a pack of wolves. You must be as cautious as snakes and as gentle as doves."

⁸ *New Living Study Bible*, fn on Judges 6:31, (Tyndale: Italy, 2015) p. 464.

⁹ Tim Keller, *Making Sense of God*, (Viking: New York, 2016), p. 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Romans 1:25 (NLT2) They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

¹² Keller, p. 90.

¹³ Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT2) ³⁷ Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

¹⁴ Richard Adkins, “Nash County Man Saves Girl in Atlantic Beach Surf,” www.wral.com (June 24, 2019).