Lesson 59 – The Earlier Judges Part I

based on Judges 6 and 7.

1) How successful was Israel in conquering the Promised Land?
Judges 1:28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and _____ _____ utterly drive them out.

After the settlement in Canaan the tribes made no vigorous effort to complete the conquest of the land. Satisfied with the territory already gained, their zeal soon flagged, and the war was discontinued.

The Lord had faithfully fulfilled, on His part, the promises made to Israel; Joshua had broken the power of the Canaanites, and had distributed the land to the tribes. It only remained for them, trusting in the assurance of divine aid, to complete the work of dispossessing the inhabitants of the land. But this they failed to do. By entering into league with the Canaanites they directly transgressed the command of God, and thus failed to fulfill the condition on which He had promised to place them in possession of Canaan.

2) What promises were given as far back as Sinai?
Exodus 23:24-25 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly _____ them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take _____ away from the midst of thee.

The assurance was given that so long as they remained obedient, God would subdue their enemies before them.

3) What promises were given as far back as Sinai?
Exodus 23:27-28 I will send my _____ before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send _____ before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

God intended that Israel should go on conquering and to conquer. He would give into their hands nations greater and more powerful than the Canaanites.

4) What was the promise in Deuteronomy?
Deuteronomy 11:22-23 For if ye shall diligently keep all these _____ which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to _____ unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.
5) What was the cost of ease and self-indulgence?
Numbers 33:55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be _____ in your eyes, and _____ in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.
6) What was recorded of them?
Psalm 106:35-36 But were _____ among the heathen, and learned their works. And they _____ their idols: which were a snare unto them.
7) How'd that go?
Psalm 106:39-40 Thus were they _____ with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he _____ his own inheritance..

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Until the generation that had received instruction from Joshua became extinct, idolatry made little headway; but the parents had prepared the way for the apostasy of their children. The disregard of the Lord's restrictions on the part of those who came in possession of Canaan sowed seeds of evil that continued to bring forth bitter fruit for many generations.

8) What resulted?
Judges 2:12 And they _____ the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were _____ _____ them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.
Psalm 78:58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to _____ with their graven images.
Psalm 78:60-61 So that he (God) forsook the _____ of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; And delivered his strength into _____, and his glory into the enemy's hand.
9) What happened to Israel in those days?
Judges 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of _____ seven years.

The Amalekites on the south of Canaan, as well as the Midianites on its eastern border, and in the deserts beyond, were still the unrelenting enemies of Israel. The latter nation had been nearly destroyed by the Israelites in the days of Moses, but they had since increased greatly, and had become numerous and powerful. They had thirsted for revenge; and now that the protecting hand of God was withdrawn from Israel, the opportunity had come. Not alone the tribes east of Jordan, but the whole land suffered from their ravages.

10) How big was the invasion?
Judges 6:5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without _____: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

Like a devouring plague they spread over the country, from the river Jordan to the Philistine plain. They came as soon as the harvests began to ripen and remained until the last fruits of the earth had been gathered. They stripped the fields of their increase and robbed and maltreated the inhabitants and then returned to the deserts. Thus, the Israelites dwelling in the open country were forced to abandon their homes, and to congregate in walled towns, to seek refuge in fortresses, or even to find shelter in caves and rocky fastnesses among the mountains. For seven years this oppression continued, and then, as the people in their distress gave heed to the Lord's reproof, and confessed their sins, God again raised up a helper for them.

11) Who was chosen to lead Israel to victory?
Judges 6:11-12 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son _____ threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou _____ man of valour.
12) What was his calling?
Judges 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt _____ Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?
13) Was Gideon fully convicted?
Judges 6:17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a _____ that thou talkest with me.

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Judges 6:19-20 And Gideon went in, and made ready a _____, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this _____, and pour out the broth. And he did so.
Judges 6:21-22 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up _____ out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight. And when Gideon _____ that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

14) What did God have Gideon do?
Judges 6:25-26 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 _____ _____ the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an _____ 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.

Gideon's father, Joash, who shared in the apostasy of his countrymen, had erected at Ophrah, where he dwelt, a large altar to Baal, at which the people of the town worshiped. Gideon was commanded to destroy this altar and to erect an altar to Jehovah over the rock on which the offering had been consumed, and there to present a sacrifice to the Lord.

The deliverance of Israel was to be preceded by a solemn protest against the worship of Baal. Gideon must declare war upon idolatry before going out to battle with the enemies of his people.Judges

15) Were the townspeople pleased with it?
Judges 6:29-30 And they said one to another, Who hath _____ this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may _____: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.

16) What did Gideon's father do to save him?
Judges 6:31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will _____ for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for _____, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

If Baal could not defend his own altar, how could he be trusted to protect his worshipers?

All thoughts of violence toward Gideon were dismissed; and when he sounded the trumpet of war, the men of Ophrah were among the first to gather to his standard. Heralds were dispatched to his own tribe of Manasseh, and also to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and all answered to the call.

Gideon dared not place himself at the head of the army without still further evidence that God had called him to his work, and that He would be with him.

17) What sign did he ask of God?
Judges 6:37-38 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the _____ be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and _____ the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

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18) Just to be sure what else did he ask?
Judges 6:39-40 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be _____ only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the _____ only, and there was dew on all the ground.

Thus encouraged, Gideon led out his forces to give battle to the invaders.

19) What strange thing did God tell Gideon?
Judges 7:2-3 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are _____ _____ for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him _____ and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

Those who were unwilling to face danger and hardships, or whose worldly interests would draw their hearts from the work of God, would add no strength to the armies of Israel. Their presence would prove only a cause of weakness.

20) What was God's reply to the reduction in the army?
Judges 7:4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet _____ _____; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

He was filled with astonishment at the declaration that his army was too large. But the Lord saw the pride and unbelief existing in the hearts of His people. Aroused by the stirring appeals of Gideon, they had readily enlisted; but many were filled with fear when they saw the multitudes of the Midianites. Yet, had Israel triumphed, those very ones would have taken the glory to themselves instead of ascribing the victory to God.

21) How did God help Gideon decide who should go?
Judges 7:5,7 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a _____ lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink… …And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the _____ _____ men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.

By the simplest means character is often tested. Those who in time of peril were intent upon supplying their own wants were not the men to be trusted in an emergency. The Lord has no place in His work for the indolent and self-indulgent. The men of His choice were the few who would not permit their own wants to delay them in the discharge of duty. The three hundred chosen men not only possessed courage and self-control, but they were men of faith. They had not defiled themselves with idolatry. God could direct them, and through them He could work deliverance for Israel. Success does not depend upon numbers. God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him.

22) How big was the invading army?
Judges 7:12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the _____ by the _____ _____ for multitude.

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Gideon trembled as he thought of the conflict of the morrow. But the Lord spoke to him in the night season and bade him, with Phurah his attendant, go down to the camp of the Midianites, intimating that he would there hear something for his encouragement.

23) What did he hear while spying on the enemy?
Judges 7:13-14 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a _____ unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the _____ of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

24) What did he declare to the small army assembled?
Judges 7:15 And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, _____; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

25) What did Gideon do?
Judges 7:16-18 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a _____ in every man's hand, with empty _____, and _____ within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The _____ of the LORD, and of Gideon.

The sleeping army was suddenly aroused. Upon every side was seen the light of the flaming torches. In every direction was heard the sound of trumpets, with the cry of the assailants. Believing themselves at the mercy of an overwhelming force, the Midianites were panic-stricken. With wild cries of alarm, they fled for life, and, mistaking their own companions for enemies, they slew one another. As news of the victory spread, thousands of the men of Israel who had been dismissed to their homes returned and joined in pursuit of their fleeing enemies. The Midianites were making their way toward the Jordan, hoping to reach their own territory, beyond the river.

In this signal defeat not less than one hundred and twenty thousand of the invaders perished. The power of the Midianites was broken, so that they were never again able to make war upon Israel. The tidings spread swiftly far and wide, that Israel's God had again fought for His people. No words can describe the terror of the surrounding nations when they learned what simple means had prevailed against the power of a bold, warlike people.

26) What was the secret of Gideon's success?
Proverbs 15:53 …before honour is _____.

The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom.

If they would cherish true humility, the Lord could do much more for His people; but there are few who can be trusted with any large measure of responsibility or success without becoming self-confident and forgetful of their dependence upon God. This is why; in choosing the instruments for His work, the Lord passes by those whom the world honors as great, talented, and brilliant. They are too often proud and self-sufficient. They feel competent to act without counsel from God.

Can you see that God is capable with a little or a lot? **Would you like to be led by God?**

When is it time to humble yourself before the LORD?

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