

## Doubt & Fear

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In our Sunday morning adult Bible class we are studying the book of Judges. This morning we talked about the dominating theme of Judges 6-7: Gideon's doubt and fear. The Gideon narrative is introduced with a picture of Israel hiding from their enemies in caves (6:1-10). God tells them, "...you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites..." (v. 10). When we meet Gideon in v. 11 he is behaving like a coward and an angel sarcastically calls him a man of valor. Later, the angel's message to Gideon is, "Do not fear..." (6:23). When God told Gideon to tear down his father's idols Gideon did so at night, "...because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day..." (6:27). When God called Israel to fight against the Midianites 32,000 men showed up. More than 2/3 of them went home because they were scared. The theme of the Gideon narrative is doubt and fear.

As I was preparing for class I came across an interesting thought in a commentary on Judges by Arthur Cundall. He is addressing how Gideon was beating out his wheat in a winepress because the harvest wasn't very big, "The same reference indicates the smallness of the harvest. It could be beaten out with a rod or staff in a confined place" (103). This reminded me of a chart I was given when I visited a financial advisor 5 years ago. The stock market was bad, and I was scared, and I did not know what to do with the money I had. He explained that when times are bad people get scared; but if they will invest in these times there is a huge potential for higher returns. The opposite is also true. When times are good and people are confident the potential for returns is minimal. I did not invest with him because I was scared. Now, I realize what a mistake that was and I have nothing to show for the money I had.

Doubt and fear prevent us from accomplishing maximum glory to God. When we hold back because we're scared we can be assured that our gains will be minimal. This is no good. God told Israel not to fear their enemies, "...you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh...So will the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid... You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God" (Deut. 7:17-19, 21).

So often I have encountered people who believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. They are convicted of their sin, and they know good and well that they need change in their lives. One excuse I hear more than any other is this: "I'm not ready because I know I will still make mistakes." This is fear of failure. Often I hear this: "If I become a Christian, then what does that say about my loved ones who have gone on before who were not Christians?" That is a form of fear. So often I have seen and felt the desire to share the Gospel message of salvation with someone who desperately needs to hear it; but for whatever reason we fail to speak. Maybe the reason is because we are afraid of what our friends and family might think of us. Maybe the reason is because we are afraid they will reject the Good News. At the end of the day, the reason fear.

A line from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is, "When our actions do not, Our fears do make us traitors." We may not speak or act against him; but when we fail to act at all because we are afraid there are no gains. God is not glorified. On the other hand, when we act through faith in the face of fear God is glorified all the more. Let us not fear. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

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