

GIDEON: A POOR MAN TO SAVE ISRAEL

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Hebrews chapter eleven contains the “great cloud of witnesses,” many of the greatest examples of the Bible for our encouragement to lay aside every weight and sin and run our spiritual race with endurance (Heb 11:1-12:4). There is not enough room in one chapter to give the details of all these examples. Several are only given by name, including one of the great Judges of Israel: Gideon. Hebrews 11:32-34 says, “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Judges 6:1-6 describes Israel’s latest departure from God and descent into rebellion and wickedness, followed by God’s punishment by sending the Midianites to oppress them mightily for seven years. Israel finally repented and cried to the Lord, and God promised them deliverance (Judg 6:6-10). God then sent an angel to Gideon to choose him to lead Israel. Judges 6:14 says, “*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?*”

God does not see as man sees

But Gideon had a very lowly earthly standing. After God’s angel told Gideon that He was sending Gideon to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites (Judg 6:14), Gideon replied, “*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*” (Judg 6:15). Gideon was least in the house of a poor family. Man would never choose such a person to lead a nation out of such distress as Israel was in. Yet Gideon was precisely the right person to do that work according to what God saw. This illustrates the fact that God does not see as man sees. In a similar situation, David, the young shepherd who was the last of eight sons of Jesse, was chosen by God to be the next king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1,11-13). When Jesse and his sons were called before Samuel, David was left behind while all the others appeared before Samuel (1 Sam 16:1-11). They didn’t even bother to bring him. But God rejected tall, handsome Eliab (1 Sam 16:6-7), and all the other sons of Jesse (1 Sam 16:8-10). And “*the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his*

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(continued)

countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7). By man's judgment, David would never have been chosen, but God saw David's heart and the fact that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). God used David to become the mightiest king Israel ever had, and it is upon his throne that Jesus Christ now sits, reigning over his spiritual kingdom, the church of Christ (2 Sam 7:16; Psa 89:3-4,29,36; Isa 9:6-7; 16:5; Jer 33:17-21; Zech 6:12-13; Luke 1:31-33; Matt 16:18-19; Acts 2:29-36).

Being prepared for the Master's use

By man's judgment, a bunch of Galilean fisherman should never have been chosen to be the Lord's apostles. But God saw their righteous hearts, and used them to turn the world upside down (Acts 5:28; 17:6). And by man's judgment, Gideon would never have been chosen either. But God saw Gideon's heart and through His angel told this lowly man, "*The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor*" (Judg 6:12). Gideon had a great faith in God and the courage to faithfully serve Him, and God used him to deliver Israel from the Midianites. The lesson from Gideon, David, the apostles, and others like them is that God looks on the heart and He chooses the lowly to do mighty things. "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Cor 1:26-29). James 2:5 similarly says, "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?*" No matter how poor and lowly our background, we need to prepare our hearts to believe in the Lord and love and serve Him with all of our heart and He can use us mightily in His work. "*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work*" (2 Tim 2:20-21).