

Unlikely Heroes

A. Scripture: Hebrews 11:32-35

- i. ³² And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again.

B. Pray

C. Judges

- **Define** – Judges: The Deliverers of Israel
- **When** - 1398-1050 bc between the leadership of Joshua and King Saul
- Not like judge Judy – “I find you guilty of parling your camel incorrectly”
- **Who** - 14 men and 1 woman
- These people were not like kings; they were leaders pinpointed by God to lead the Jews in certain situations, particularly in times of military conflict.
- **Why** - Israel came in and out of apostasy (falling away from the one true and living God), participated in idol worship and rebellion. Disobedient.
 - i. When they were being corrected, allowed or taken through seriously hard times, Jewish people would cry out to God and draw near to Him. He would deliver them
 - ii. When things were good they tended to forget Him. Or if He took too long to answer, or if they didn't like the answer, they would turn to other gods and methods.
 - iii. “The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; they forgot the LORD their God...”

- iv. People would try to mix different religions and remember God just enough to keep Him happy. This mixing of religious beliefs is called syncretism. God did not approve of it or of idol worship.
- Don't judge the children of Israel too harshly. Think of people today. We don't like to be told no, or told to wait. We don't like to suffer. When those things happen, there's a tendency to be angry at God instead of clinging to Him and trusting Him like we should
- Truthfully, we have much mixing of religious ideas today. Some believe that all roads lead to God, and Jesus should just be one of the gods that should be included.
- All five judges mentioned here were examples of people who struggled in their humanity and made major mistakes.
 - i. Barak mentioned - even though he wouldn't step out like God told him to without the insistence of Deborah.
 - ii. Jephthah mentioned - even though he made a rash and foolish vow that cost the life of his daughter
 - iii. Samuel mentioned - but he appointed his sons as judges even though they were evil
- But this morning we will concentrate on Gideon and Samson

D. Gideon

- **Gideon – Mighty Man of Valor - Judges 6 & 7**
 - Gideon is called upon to save the people of Israel by leading them against the Midianites.
 - In a common theme of apostasy, the people of Israel had done "what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian."
 - The Midianites were capturing any crops produced by the Israelites, giving them grief.

- When the people of Israel realized the error of their ways and cried out for help to the Lord, a prophet was sent to deliver them as they had been rescued from Egypt.
- Angel of the Lord (THEOPHANY) appeared to Gideon, while harvesting wheat and hiding from the Midianites
- Hi, mighty man of courage. God is sending you to "save Israel from the hand of Midian."
- Although at first Gideon doubts his ability to do so, he is heartened that God will be with him in this mission.
- The first task he is commanded to fulfill is destroying the Altar of Baal the Israelites have constructed, evidence of their apostasy. And so, during the night, Gideon and ten of his men took down the Altar of Baal making the townspeople very angry and asking for the death of the altar destroyer. Joash, the father of Gideon, then tells them if Baal really is a god he will kill Gideon himself, saving his son.
- Seeking reassurance from the Lord, Gideon twice requests proof of God's promise to save Israel using a fleece.
- Encouraged by the acts of God, Gideon and his men then travel near the camp of Midian and prepare for battle. It is clear that God wants the Israelites to realize his divine validity,
- God tells Gideon to lessen his army from 32,000, to 10,000, to just 300 men to defeat the Midianites who had about 135,000 troops.

- Gideon commanded his 300 comrades to surround the Midian camp, making it seem the Midianites were greatly outnumbered, then blow their trumpets on every side and shout, "For the Lord and for Gideon!"
- There is no indication in the bible that the Lord told Gideon to do these steps. It appears that God asked him to step out in faith and then moved in his heart, or used his intelligence or creativity to come up with the strategy.
- When the Midianites heard the trumpets and saw the torches surrounding their camp they cried out and fled, a triumphant victory for Gideon and the Israelites.
- In spite of doubting or possibly wavering, Gideon decided to step out and believe God. The results speak for themselves

E. Samson

- **Samson - The Strongest Man in the World - Judges 13-16**
- A quick overview of the story of Samson and Delilah begins with the announcement of Samson's birth by the angel of the Lord (Judges 13:1–24).
- In fact, Samson is one of the few in Scripture whose birth was divinely preannounced to his parents (Judges 13:3). He shares this honor with Isaac, John the Baptist, and Jesus.
- Samson, whose name means "sunshine," was judge during a dark period of Israel's history. Seven times this nation had turned from God and now found themselves under the oppressive rule of the Philistines.
- Samson was born a Nazirite, meaning he was "separated" or "set aside" for God.

- This meant that he was not to drink wine or fruit of the vine. He couldn't go near or touch a dead body, human or animal, nor could he cut his hair.
- Though he was set apart for special service to God (Judges 13:5), Samson ignored his Nazirite vow of godly devotion and relied upon his own strength and abilities rather than upon God's.
- Although God empowered him with supernatural strength to begin the deliverance of the people of Israel from the Philistines, it was his weakness for the Philistine women that did him in (Judges 14:1–3, 16:1–22). His passion for women was more important to him than God's expressed will (Deuteronomy 7:3).
- During his wedding to a Philistine woman, Samson was deceived and humiliated by his wife and wedding guests. Angered, Samson got his revenge by personally killing 1,000 men).
- But, in the end it was his passionate obsession for Delilah that led him to reveal to her the secret of his strength. His hair was cut by Delilah, and, as a result, he was captured, blinded, and forced to grind grain for his enemies.
- Eventually, while in prison, Samson's strength did return, and he died while destroying the temple of the Philistine god Dagon, killing thousands of Philistines.
- With the Spirit of God upon him Samson was a powerful man with supernatural strength. The story reveals that he was also very intelligent with an unusual sense of humor.
- While he had almost unlimited potential to deliver his people from the Philistines, his story ends in a needless tragedy. He failed to deliver his people, and although he killed many philistines, he ended up killing himself.

- Despite his having the Spirit of the Lord upon him at times, his personal life wrecked him.
- He was courageous before men but weak when it came to women

F. Overall observations

- Being consumed with our personal weaknesses and strengths can be detrimental to our spiritual growth
 - i. “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less often
 - ii. We see two men on opposite ends of the spectrum
 - iii. Gideon – thought he wasn’t good enough – not humility
 - iv. Samson – thought too highly of himself – not self-esteem
 - v. “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” James 4:6-10
 - vi. This is speaking to the need of every person to realize they cannot do it on their own.
 - vii. Although God made us with gifts and talents that make us capable human beings...
 - viii. Although we are sometimes strong and courageous...
 - ix. Although we often have stubborn, headstrong streaks...
 - x. We are still asked to come in total dependence on God. To come as a little child to our father

xi. To trust someone higher, stronger, wiser, perfect, all-knowing, all-powerful, always watching, always present God.

- **God uses imperfect people to accomplish His will.**

- i. God forgives and shows mercy. God saw Samson as a man of faith. Even in his failure he turned to God and believed God would allow him his last feat of strength
- ii. Gideon felt like a nobody, going nowhere, who had no one on his side. God saw him differently
- iii. God saw both of these men for the purposes they were designed for
- iv. He sees us that way too

- **Gideon's first step was tearing down the idols, and it should have been for Samson. It's the same for us**

- i. This was not a prerequisite, but was part of the process
- ii. After realizing God was with him, and his faith in God being strengthened, Gideon stepped out.
- iii. Not crazy boldness here, truth is he did it under the cover of night. Still God was with him
- iv. Later on Gideon asked God to confirm what He told him two more times in the story!
- v. Could it be that faith in God, even imperfect faith, sometimes timid faith, is still enough for God to respond?
 1. "Oh Lord I believe, help my unbelief" (father of demon possessed child said in Mark 9:24)
- vi. Sometimes God leads us to say something, to give something, to ask someone to coffee, to make a meal, to offer to pray, to say a

kind word. Those things are faith builders and steps of obedience to take

vii. Sometimes we think that the preliminary steps God tells us to do is something to step over to get to the good stuff. But very often those things are the good stuff. It is the very work that God desires to do.

- God wants to make sure that everyone knows it is He who brings the victory, not the might of man

- i. In our weakness, His strength is made perfect
- ii. Did you notice that Gideon had to cut down his army from 32,000 to 300 men?
- iii. Time and time again we see in the Bible, and in our lives, that it is when things seem impossible or too late, that God moves in the most unexpected ways.

- The deeper we allow ourselves to be influenced by the glamour and allurement of sin, the more blind we become.

- i. Samson was blind long before his eyes were gouged out
- ii. Sin comes with consequences. Samson lived a life that was self-centered and gave in continually to the lust of the flesh.
- iii. It affected everyone around him. His family, the children of Israel, and his own self. He led others into disobedience. He was spiritually blind before he became physically blind.
- iv. The Bible says that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy, but Christ has come that you may have life.
- v. "In truth, sin will take us farther than we may intend to go. It will hold us longer than we intend to stay. Furthermore, sin will cost us more than we intend to pay."

- vi. If you've never given your heart or life completely to God, chances are you haven't seen your need for God and to have your sins forgiven until maybe this very moment
- vii. The Bible says God saw you before the foundation of the world. He knew you would be imperfect and make mistakes. He knew you would need a way to come to Him
- viii. And He loved you. He chose to send His son to die on a cross for the forgiveness of sin.
- ix. He loves you still. He wants you to know Him. To be redeemed. To come to Him.
- x. If you are a believer but have given in chronically to the temptation of sin, He wants to forgive you too. He wants you to come back to Him, to give Him your whole heart again.
 - 1. "Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it *spring* the issues of life." Prov 4:23

G. Let's Pray

H. Altar Call

I. COMMUNION