

Judges 6:1-13

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, go into the book of Judges, Judges chapter 6. Judges chapter 6, we're kind of going to open up a very familiar account to us in the book of Judges, and we're going to look at Judges 6, verses 1-13 will be our text this evening.

Judges chapter 6, verses 1-13, as we just continue to make our way through the Bible. Particularly, we are in the book of Judges at this point, so we're making our way through Scripture as it's contained in the book of Judges.

Judges 6, verses 1-13, and then we will pray. So let's pray together. Lord, we're so thankful for this day, and God, we rejoice in all that you've given us the opportunity to do. We thank you for every moment that you've blessed us with.

We thank you for every chance we have together, together as your people, to proclaim your praises, Lord, to open up the pages of Scripture, to come before you saying, speak to us, O Lord. God, as we open up the pages of the Old Testament, we ask that your Word would have its way in our life.

We pray that we would come to a greater understanding, not only of who we are, but also, God, who you are. That our understanding of you would increase and lead to a greater devotion.

[1 : 19] Lord, a more steadfast heart of praise, or a more sincere worship. And, God, that we would constantly be amazed at your goodness, your grace, and your mercy. Lord, we pray that you just continue to keep your hand upon those families around us that are hurting.

Lord, those who have lost loved ones, we pray comfort around them. Just be glorified and honored in all that takes place, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Before I forget, funeral arrangements for Miss Marianne Floyd, which is Miss Sheila, Miss Debbie's mother. A visitation will be Tuesday from 12 to 2 at Hillcrest.

The funeral will be at 2. The family does not want us to host a meal, but they have asked if we wouldn't mind getting some food together and bringing it to the funeral home.

So, I will send out a message and ask if anybody wants to bring food here by the church early that morning or earlier in the day, Tuesday morning, or get it to us somehow.

[2 : 20] Or, if it's more convenient to you to go ahead and take it to the funeral home and anyone around here who want to drop it off, then we will carry it over to Hillcrest. I'll probably try to get it there sometime a little after 11 so that there's food there for them while they're at the funeral home.

And we can be sure to provide a meal that way. We will not have anything following service. We're just going to try to get some stuff together and bring it to them for the family during their time there. So, Tuesday will be that day. Okay? Judges chapter 6, starting in verse 1, and we'll read down to the 13th verse, and then we'll look at the word together.

Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. And the power of Midian prevailed against Israel.

Because of Midian, the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For it was when Israel had sown that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them.

[3 : 25] So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, and they would come in like locusts for number.

Both they and their camels were innumerable, and they came into the land to devastate it. So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord. Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel.

And he said to them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and

from the hands of all your oppressors and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land. And I said to you, I am the Lord your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live, but you have not obeyed me. Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Orphra, which belonged to Joash the Abysserite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress in order to save it from the Midianites.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.

Verse 13. Then Gideon said to him, O my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

[4 : 49] And where are all his miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.

Judges 6, verses 1 through 13. We enter into a very familiar account in the book of Judges.

And actually the one judge that more verses are dedicated to than any other judge. The one judge that has the bulk of time spent upon him, which is the judge of Gideon.

It is Gideon alone that we know wrestles with even his own faith, wrestles with his own belief. It is Gideon who will test the Lord. Even today we use the saying, putting out a fleece, to see if this is the Lord's leading.

It is Gideon who will be used to do a number of things. Some have described him as a doubter, a deliverer, and then one who kind of backtracks and becomes a compromiser.

[5 : 55] It is he who will be used mightily of the Lord, but near the end of his life his children will come up and follow a not too good of example of faith.

On the outside, Gideon seems to say, I don't need to be your king, don't make me king. But on the inside, he still takes the jewelry from the people and makes an ephod or a small idol and kind of promotes himself, self-promotion from within.

But that's near the end of his life. We know the one account of Gideon that he will be used mightily as God narrows down his armed forces and gives him an army that really has no hope.

Their only instruments of warfare are torches and lanterns and jars. They have bugles, they have trumpets, they have jars, and they have lanterns. That's all they have.

But yet God uses Gideon and his 300 men to rout the Midianites and to set them free. And we come here to the introduction of that. It seems to be the recurrent theme which we find over and over again that the nation of Israel does good for a while and then they go further and further and further down into the muck and mire of their own sinful choices.

[7 : 05] And they suffer as a result of this self-induced sin, these consequences that are their own doing, the things which they have decided to live in rebellion and to disobey God and to live like the inhabitants of the land who were pronounced cursed rather than living like the people of God that were pronounced blessed.

And when they get what they want, that is to be like the people around them, they eventually get what comes to the people around them and that's the misery and the pain. And we see even here when they were supposed to be the head that is plundering, they begin to be the tail that is being plundered.

And we see them cry out to God and God raise up another deliverer, another judge. The same word there is used for a kinsman, redeemer, that we have in the book of Ruth with Boaz, which is the same word picture that is pointing to Christ, our redeemer.

But we get lost in all these details and we get lost in all these accounts and it seems like we've read this story before and it's really, it's the account of man, not the account of what happened to God's people in the nation of Israel.

It's this man in his own works. This is, as the book of Judges tells us, what it looks like when there's no king in the land and every man does what is right in his own eyes. When man gets his way, this is what it looks like.

[8 : 26] But in the middle of that, I want you to see from these 13 verses the evidence of God's concern for his people. The evidence of God's concern for his people.

Because if we find man's failures throughout the book of Judges, and we do, we should not be as amazed at man's failures as we are amazed at God's faithfulness.

I mean, why doesn't he just give up? Why doesn't he quit? Why does he continue to remain faithful still? Now, we know the ultimate answer to that.

The ultimate answer is because God had made a covenant, right? He had made a covenant. He had made the edemic covenant that the seed of a woman would crush the head of Satan. He had made the Abrahamic covenant that the seed of Abraham would be he who would reign over all the world. And there's this covenant after covenant after covenant after covenant. We understand that God is faithful to his covenant even when his people fail.

[9 : 28] And this reassures for us the reality that it is not the ability or the faithfulness of man, but rather it is the ability and the faithfulness of God that ensures the securing of his promises.

That what he has declared will be actually will be. What we do see here in the first 13 verses of this chapter that there is clear evidence that even as his people fail, God has great concern for them. He is faithful to his covenant. He's also faithful to his people. And this is comforting to us because none of us are perfect. We fail. We stumble. We mess up.

We falter. And we all too often live like the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. We live as if there's no king in the land. And we all do what is right in our own eyes. And while it may not go to the extremity that it did in the book of Judges, we do see consequences that come upon our lives.

And it is in the midst of those consequences that we cry out and God is so faithful. We're not like Paul using grace as a crutch to sin. But what we do find is that even when we are at our lowest, when we cry out, God is faithful still.

[10 : 39] Because salvation was not earned by us. Therefore, it is not maintained by us. It is not secured by us. Salvation is of the Lord. Therefore, it is maintained and secured by him and him alone.

And we find assurance in this evidence of God's concern for his people. I will tell you there are five. It will not take me long to go through them. But there are five that point themselves out in this chapter or in these few verses.

Number one, we see the assurance that comes from, and this one we wish we didn't see, a punishment for rebellion. A punishment for rebellion.

It says, then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They chose to live in open rebellion.

The sons of Israel did not just mess up, did not just make a mistake. They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Rather than living as God's people, they began to live as inhabitants of the land.

[11 : 46] Rather than worshiping the Lord their God, they began to worship the bells and the asherah. I mean, even Gideon's dad has an altar to Baal and an asherah pole raised up.

We'll get to that later on in this chapter. Gideon's own family is a part of that. Gideon's name will be changed from Gideon by his dad.

He will be given a name that has Baal implications. That means let Baal contend with him after he destroys the altar of Baal. So his connection there is directly tied to a people who are living and acting as evil in the sight of the Lord.

And as they do this, we are reminded through the book of Judges that as people make a choice to live contrary to the word of God, contrary to the clear commands of God and doing evil in the presence of God, we always read this, The Lord gave them into the hands of Midian.

The people choose to rebel and God brings about his disciplinarian action. God gave them into the hands of Midian. The pain and the struggle and the discomfort that comes from the reality of what Midian does to the people is a direct result of the Lord God's doing.

[13 : 11] It says during that time they had the strongholds in the caves up in the mountain because what would take place is when they would plant their fields every time it came around to harvest season.

In our neck of the woods, that's this time of the year. When it came up to harvest season, there would be these annual raids where the Midianites and the Malachites would come and they would come on their camels and they would strip the land.

So when the people would come in for the raid, the people of Israel would go up into the strongholds and hide in the caves. And they would kind of hunker down until everybody left. And after they left, they would come out and all of the hope of their produce, all of the hope of their fields, all of the hope of their livestock, everything would have been gone and taken.

And this happened every year for seven years. For seven years, this disciplinary action was displayed. And the reality we see is it is the Lord who enables it, appoints it, and brings it about.

But we understand also that he brings it about for a definite time. I'm thankful that in each one of these, we are told exactly how long they suffer under these consequences.

[14 : 23] This time it's seven years. It is mindful of us that God has a number. God has an ordained day. But we also understand that the reality that they were living as wicked and evil in the sight of the Lord their God deserved punishment and that God brought about that punishment is evidence that he is concerned for them.

Because how many people around them were living the same manner, yet God did not bring that same punishment to them. The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews that he whom God loves, he disciplines.

He whom he loves, he rebukes. Much as a father does his own child. Disciplinary action and punishment is a direct reflection of concern.

Because God longs for his people to live holy. He longs for his people to live according to his calling and his standard. And he is not content to let his people live as they so choose.

So the punishment that is brought upon them is a clear evidence that God is concerned for them.

Because the scariest portions of scripture we can find.

[15 : 41] We find in Romans chapter 1. We find it in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. And we find it in other portions of scripture where it says God gave them over.

God gave them over. Because the scariest thing is not for God to quit disciplining us. The scariest thing is for him to give up on us.

And we say that in human terminology. Because he never gives up. But for him to give us over to our own desires. To the point that we no longer feel the pain and the consequences of our sinful action.

Because the discomfort and the pain and the sorrow. It has a purpose. It has an ordained plan. And it has a calling.

The Bible tells us that the spirit comes to bring conviction of sin. To bring discomfort in the life of a believer. That it is there to bring peace. Sure.

[16 : 45] But the majority of the ministry of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer is to bring unrest. When there is sin and discord. And to bring conviction to the world. Of the reality of their breaking of God's standard.

He comes for the purpose of bringing God's punishment to a reality. At least in the hearts and the minds of his people. And it is a clear testimony to the reality that God is concerned for them.

Because these are the very things which draw us to the very place where God's people come. And that is where they finally cry out. We need to praise God for the circumstances that even at times.

Not at times. The majority of times are a direct result from our own choices. That he allows and permits and sometimes even ordains these circumstances.

To bring us to the place where we are beyond ourselves and we must cry out. Because it is here that we see that God cares enough about us to get us to that point.

[17 : 51] It would have been much worse for him to cast them aside and to leave them alone. But the reality that he punished them is evidence that he cares about them.

So then eventually they come to this place where it says in the 6th verse. So Israel was brought very low. Brought very low.

Because of Midian. And the sons of Israel cried to the Lord. Which leads us to the 2nd testimony. That God cares for his people.

And that is a petition heard. God brought them very low. Which is good news. Because there is no pit so low. No place so low that God cannot hear us cry.

And quite often it is his action which brings us to that point of lowliness. That leads us to cry out in desperation. And that is the very aim and the very purpose of his discipline.

[18 : 51] It is the reality that God is bringing us to a point where we are below everything we have trusted in. Everything that we have hoped to. And when we finally get low enough we have nowhere else to go but up.

We cry out to the only one who can pull us up out of that pit that we are in. It says they were brought very low. And they cried to the Lord. Now we know from the book of Judges.

That when they cry out to the Lord. They are not crying out with a penitent heart. And they are not crying out saying. Woe is me for I am a sinner. And beating their chest as we find the public in doing in the New Testament.

They are not crying out saying, I am a sinner condemned unclean. They are crying out because of the misery of their circumstances. And they are crying out because of the pain of their situation. And as we have said before. That they would be content to have the sin without the consequences. If they could. But God did not permit it because God ordained that the consequences would bring them to the point where sin was unbearable.

[19 : 54] And he still does that today with us. It is dangerous when sin all of a sudden becomes bearable. And God no longer allows us to feel the pain and the weight of that.

But we see that even in that cry God hears. And not only does he hear. He responds to this petition. He knows their hearts.

He knows their minds. But demonstrating his greatness. Not their worthiness. Demonstrating his mercy. Not their efforts. Or not their works.

It says now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian. Not on account of their sin. But on account of Midian. That the Lord sent a prophet. God responds to the petition of his people.

How many people throughout the ages and even through history. Have cried out to suffer some help in the middle of misery and pain and suffering. And yet it remains unheard.

[20 : 55] I watched recently a show. Carrie and I watched one. Jeremy Wade.

Some of you may not know him. I look around. Most of you here may not know him. He goes around a lot of rivers and does a lot of fishing. He did a thing called the Mighty Rivers.

Where he went around just checking the health of the rivers of our world. Six major rivers. One of them was the Genghis River in India. And he went to the capital of India.

And he was looking at the Genghis River there. The reality is that there's no major fish there anymore. There's nothing that is beneficial. Fishing has. Fishing industry has died off.

This population is overwhelming the city. There's sewage being dumped into it. And he did a count. There's a scientist there or biologist that actually posts each day on a whiteboard on a building account.

[21 : 59] Of like human bacteria that's in the water. He puts it. He makes it public. Now for drinking water. The scientists say you want zero parts per million in your water if you're going to drink it.

If you want to bathe in it or swim in it you want no more than 500 parts per million. In that particular part of the Genghis River there on that day there were 80,000 parts per million of human feces. Disgusting right? But that's also the place where the Hindu people go and bathe and drink the water thinking that it gives them spiritual cleansing.

And where in all of their ambition they want their bodies to be set on fire and laid to rest at that point in the river. So they can escape this repetition cycle of reincarnation.

One of the dirtiest parts of water in all the world. They're trusting in to deliver them. But there is no deliverance in that.

[23 : 11] See when man suffers. People see that sign. They walk right past it. But they still count the water as holy. I mean it's right there.

It's public knowledge. It doesn't matter. Because they're trusting in it. Their life's pain and misery and this cycle of repetition is so much.

They're crying out and yet they're never heard. How much more do we stand in the reality that when God hears our petitions. He responds.

What great comfort that brings. He cares about us. The petition heard. The third thing we see that is evidence of God's concern.

Is the prophetic word spoken. The fact that not only God heard. He also declared his word to them. Verse 7.

[24 : 12] Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian. Here's verse 8. That the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel. We don't know who he is. It's an unnamed prophet. And he said to them.

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. It was I who brought you up from Egypt. And brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians. And from the hands of all your oppressors. And dispossessed them before you.

And gave you their land. And I said to you. I am the Lord your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites. In whose land you live. But you have not obeyed me. See a lot of times when we get to the place where we can't take it anymore.

And all we want is for the pain and the misery and the suffering to stop. Just like the nation here. Quite often the very way God responds to us is with his word. And here he gives them a prophetic word.

And the prophet stands up and declares this word. And as is in Old Testament and even New Testament sense. He always reminds them of what God did for them.

[25 : 13] And in light of what God has already done. Their response to that. So the word does not come saying this is what you should do. The word comes and says this is what I have done.

And then this is how you responded. Warren Wiersbe. The great Bible application expert said. That when the word of God comes to us quite often.

It does not show us a work that we have to do to earn a position. Rather it shows us a position we already have. And a work we should do in light of that position. Not in order that we may gain it. But since we already have it. How we ought to live up to it. And that is what God's word says to them here. But again we stand amazed that so many people.

Even during this time. The nation of Israel is but a small demographic of the human population. You can go read history at this time. And study all of the things that are going on around the world at this time.

[26 : 12] This is in some of the waning days of one Egyptian empire. Going into the next part of an Egyptian empire during this time. And there is this overlapping of things that are going on in dynasties.

They are building the pyramids about this time by the way. Historically. And there is a lot of great work going on. And there is a lot of different things that are happening around the world. And there are things taking place.

There is this small demographic of people in all of the world. And with all of the suffering. With all of the pain that is going on. God chooses to speak to them. He is concerned for them.

He demonstrates his concern because he has a word. Even a word that is penetrating and convicting and hard to accept. He has a word for them.

We know that God is concerned for us when he speaks to us through his word. When we open up the pages of scripture. And we come upon passages that bring us comfort. That is great. When we come upon passages that bring us conviction.

[27 : 12] That too is great. Because this is a reminder that God is concerned enough for us. That he speaks to us through his word. Not all of the word brings goosebumps and great feelings.

Sometimes it is goosebumps and scary feelings. Right? We understand that. But he speaks to us through his word. And the fact that he speaks his word to his people. Is evidence.

He is concerned. And yet we wonder. Through the book of Judges. Does God even care? The reason we wonder is because that is the same question that Gideon asked.

Right? If God cares. Where is he? Gideon? The fact that Gideon has forgotten the fact that prior to his encounter with the angel of the Lord.

Which is a theophany or Christophany. A picture of Christ in the Old Testament. I believe he had also already sent a prophet. And declared the word of God to them.

[28 : 11] Nobody else had God of heaven speaking to them. he here is showing his concern the fourth thing we see that is evidence of his concern and we're making our way quickly is that there is a person called says then the angel of the Lord the reason I believe this is a Christophany look in verse 11 it says then the angel of the Lord verse 12 says the angel of the Lord appeared and then if you go down in verse 14 there's no change in people that are there I know we didn't read 14 we'll get to it next time we're together the Lord looked at him so the text itself tells us that this angel that is present in the 14th verse it says the Lord looked at him so here we have Christophany or a picture of God in the Old Testament the reason I always say Christophany theophany is an appearance of God I like a Christophany because Jesus himself says that no one has ever seen the Father but me and he who has seen me has seen the Father so there's no other way that God has appeared in all of history than in the person of Jesus Christ and Christ is eternal he's also the word of God that way I think at the burning bush this is a Christophany he is the one who has spoke in the place of God or as God so he is the word that became flesh so anytime we hear God speaking

I believe it's Christ that's my understanding of it and we can look at that in detail at some other time but here we're reminded that the angel of the Lord in verse 11 came and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah which belonged to Joash the Abysserite who by the way is an idol worshiper as his

son Gideon was beating out wheat in a wine press in order to save it from the Midianites so here again we're reminded of their lowly condition Gideon here is threshing wheat he's throwing it up into the air and letting the wind catch it and separate the chaff from the wheat the reality is is when you're in this depression of the wine vat that's not going to happen very well or too good because you need to be in open land where there's a lot of wind blowing through so there's not going to be much wheat gathered this way but yet he finds that any wheat that he can glean and save it from the Midianites however meager it may be has got to be an advantage of doing this out in the open so he's not necessarily one that we would count a valiant warrior as he's so greeted it's not one that we think that would be strong and mighty but yet we are reminded here that the angel of the Lord appears to a person and he's going to call this person and this again is testimony that God cares God didn't just speak to them through the word now God is going to call a person this person is going to be the deliverer and we are even more reminded that God cares because God is calling the most unlikely of persons to do the most unlikely of things and he's going to do it in the most unlikely of ways and the reason God is calling the most unlikely of persons because Gideon says I'm the lowliest of all my family I don't understand this you know I'm not who you think that I am and he begins to humble himself rather than exalt himself and the reason he calls the most unlikely is so that in the end we see that deliverance is not by Gideon but deliverance is by the Lord that God is going to display his concern through his use of Gideon and no one would be able to say boy Gideon really cares about us because Gideon could not do what he was about to be called to do rather people would have to say the Lord used Gideon to show his concern for us if God had chosen someone who had strength and might and had been doing all of these things and could we see that happening in Samson right we see what happens as Samson goes along but yet God chooses this most unlikely candidate and does it so that everyone would know it's not Gideon's decision you know what I'm going to do

I'm going to climb out of this wine vat I'm going to quit threshing wheat down here in this wine vat and I'm going to go get me some lanterns some jars and some horns and I'm going to go kill the Midianites that's not his plan at all and we're reminded that God is just displaying his concern through Gideon by the way Stephen uses a similar defense in the book of Acts Acts chapter 7 throughout history God always used the most unlikely of people and in the minds of the Jewish leaders Jesus Christ himself was the most unlikely born in the lowliest of conditions raised in the lowliest of environment the most unlikely but he is the greatest of all and the greatest demonstration of God's concern for what he did for us a person called fifth and finally we see the evidence of God's concern for his people even in this self-induced suffering because of a promise reaffirmed when the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon it says in verse 12 then the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him the Lord is with you

O valiant warrior there is some question and interpretation there some think that rather than ascribing Gideon or describing Gideon as being a valiant warrior it is ascribing the character traits of being a valiant warrior to the Lord God that the Lord who is with you is a valiant warrior but either way however we interpret it the promise we see reaffirmed is that the Lord is with you now over and over again we have been using this covenant name of God Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh this Yahweh name was to stand as a reminder of the people of Israel that they stood in a very unique relationship with the Lord God of heaven and earth that they were in a covenant relationship that they were his people he was their God and he was with them Gideon here doubts that reality if he is with us then why don't we see these things but one of the evidences that God cares about his people is that the first thing that the angel of the Lord declares here is this reaffirmed promise the Lord is indeed with you even in the midst of this discipline, suffering your choices, your consequences the Lord is with you and he reminds them of this so that there would be clearer evidence that would testify to the reality that God is still with his people even when they have failed and that failure was a result of their own choices and what was going on was their consequences from the things they had decided to do the promise still stands true the Lord was with you bringing about his purposes his plans for his glory we see in this whole account yes we see man's failures but we see the faithfulness of God to continue to demonstrate a legitimate concern for his people even when they don't deserve it we stand amazed at that let's pray

[35 : 39] Lord thank you so much for allowing us to gather together thank you for the blessing of your word Lord may our lives be conformed to it for your glory and we ask it in Christ's name Amen alright would you take your hymnals and go with me to hymn 456 and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in

and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and
come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in and come in
and come in and come in and come in and come in Thank you.

Thank you.