

Fairytales / happy endings

Our world / sad endings – meant to leave us torn up inside, filled with questions

- Judges -

Judges / sad ending

Judges is an historical account with a theological message.

Chaps 6-8 – Story of Gideon

## - A Battle Only God Can Win -

Break that down...

**Theological Message: Your foes are too big, you are too weak, but God is stronger.**

*[Read 6:1-6]*

### 1. First Movement – “desperate”

Foe: Midian (and their cronies) – who they are / what they've been doing / how Israel feels about it

Ever feel that way?

*[Read 6:7-10]*

Israel cries out to God / God responds by sending a prophet

*It's a message that says bad things happen not by God's being a psychopath, unable to stop Midian, or by chance, but as the result of something deeper. In our man-centeredness, pride, self-righteousness we say things like, "God I don't deserve this! I've been working so hard to serve you." Or "Why do bad things happen to good people?"*

*[Read 6:11-16]* – God's gracious response

Their conversation/exchange – God speaks, Gideon objects

**God's word to Gideon: you are strong, I am with you**

But Gideon is not strong!

*God never tells Gideon he's strong without also telling him that he's with him. Gideon is strong because God is with him. And if Gideon obeys God, he will become the instrument of that strength to save Israel from the Midianites. As Gideon hears the promises of God and acts on them in faith, he becomes the conduit of the strength of God and is able to do what no human being can do on his own.*

Gideon's first assignment

Two reasons: Christening of Gideon – personal act of worship / new name

Message to the people of Israel

*Yet another sign that the problems here are the result of something, something deeper than just Midian and the solution is more than just defeating an army.*

*[Read 6:33-35]*

## **2. Second Movement – “saved...”**

God's favor on Gideon

Gideon's signs – weakness / but not disobedience / demonstration of God's mercy and determination to preserve his people

Army reduced

Why did God do this?

*[Read 7:2] – central verse*

*Lesson: Israel is nothing on their own. They are strong only when they walk in faith-filled obedience.*

*We don't want a God like that. As we think about the Midianites in our lives, we want a God who will hear our cries and answer them in ways that make sense to us. We don't want God delivering us in ways we don't understand, that require us to walk by faith. We want instant answers and the satisfaction that we made it happen.*

God is not a genie (functional) / not a grocery store clerk (transactional) / but God who is shaping us to be worshippers

*God cares more about your worship than he does about your bucket list  
God cares more about your worship than he does about your comfort  
God cares more about your worship than he does about your self-esteem  
God cares more that you worship him than that you figure him out*

*That's what he wanted for Israel and that's what he wants for you.*

The miraculous victory – Israel doesn't even have to raise a finger

## **3. Third Movement – “...temporarily and more desperate than before”**

Gideon's weaknesses – absence of God / personal vendetta / retaliation

*Whether he was supposed to chase after them or not, his motives were at least mixed. Even great, godly men are still weak men prone to wander.*

Sad ending / no parties here, just idolatry

*[Read 8:22]*

*[Read 8:33-35]*

*So blind and stupid, the people of Israel never got the message. They had prophet after prophet, text after text, ritual after ritual to remind them that God had called them, saved them, set them apart, shown them steadfast love, and set them up with guidelines that would cause them to experience life as it was meant to be lived. Yet they spit in God's face time and time again.*

*Midian was never their problem. Midian was the result of their problem. Their problem was sin that had corrupted them down to their very dna so that having eyes, they could not hear, and ears they could not see.*

*You are no different.*

*Your greatest problem is not your spouse, your boss, the amount of money you make, the car you drive, the career you're in, the fact that your friends don't like you, or that you don't have a sexy body, or your health. Your greatest problem is not even that you're an alcoholic or that you struggle with pornography, or that you have road rage, or that you spurn the promises of God by worrying day in and day out.*

*Your greatest problem is what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2...*

*[Ephesians 2:1-3]*

***2** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

*So the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" or "why do good characters get stuck with bad endings?" is the wrong question because there has only been one good person in the history of the world. His name is Jesus.*

*Like Gideon – deliverer / weak / faith-filled obedience*

*Unlike Gideon – perfect / divine / fighting a different battle*

*The Gospel*

*Now those who say "my sin is too big and I am too weak to take care of it, but God is stronger and I will believe in him" will be given a new life.*

*For Christians – believe the promises (the war is over, you're not enslaved) / act in faith-filled obedience*

*You will never defeat that besetting sin until or be content in that situation until you stop trying fight it in your own strength.*

*[Read 1 Corinthians 12:9-10]*

*<sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*Judges – sad ending / today – sad endings / end of time – happy ending*