

**The Rescue
Judges 6-7**

Notes

Repentance of sin, trusting in the Lord, and living in obedience to God's word brings victory to the Christian life.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most devastating effects of sin is that it distorts our view of reality.

Sin entraps us, imprisons us, and holds us hostage, seeking to destroy us, all while veiling our eyes of this devastating reality.

Sin keeps us from believing we need rescuing. Sin keeps us distracted and dull from its effects.

But beloved, there is a rescuer who is seeking to give you freedom, give you life, and give you himself.

There is a God who has literally battled hell on your behalf so that you may be rescued from the effects and dominion of sin.

And there is nothing that can keep him from finding you.

In 1989 an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes.

During the devastation a father rushed to his son's school to look for him only to discover the building flattened.

After the initial shock, he remembered a promise he made to his son, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you."

The debris looked hopeless, but he went to work. He began digging at the place where he remembered his son's class to be.

As he was digging other parents arrived and tried to pull him away telling him it was hopeless.

The fire chief showed up and tried to pull him off warning him of fires breaking out.

The police came and told him in his distraught state that he was endangering others and to go home.

Courageously he proceeded alone.

He dug for 8 hours, 12 hours, 24 hours, 36 hours and then in the 38th hour he pulled back a boulder and heard his son's voice. He screamed his son's name and he heard back, "Dad! It's me. I told the other kids not to worry. I told them if you were alive, you would save me and when you saved me, they'd be saved. You promised you would always be there for me!"

He reached to get his son and his son said, “No dad. Let the other kids go out first, because I know you will get me.”

Our world is crushed because of sin. Our families are crushed because of sin. Our communities and our schools are crushed by sin. Our lives have been crushed because of sin.

The initial shock may cause us to lose hope and sink into despair, but rest assured, there is a Savior, a Rescuer who is combing through the rubble of this world, through the rubble of your life to rescue you and bring you to himself.

As we move into Judges 6-7, we will see the first part of a two-part story of the life of the Judge named Gideon.

In chapters 6-7 we will notice the loss of victory due to sin, the misunderstanding of sin and its effects, and the rebuilding of victory.

Before we begin let me ask, are you in need of rescue in your life right now?

In what ways are you failing to acknowledge sin in your life and how is it entrapping you?

As we acknowledge and repent of our sin, we see a more victorious way to live in the freedom of Jesus.

A brief overview of Chapters 6-7

- 40 years of peace with the leadership of Debra
- Israel in sin
- God sends a prophet to show them their sin
- He calls Gideon to be the rescuer
- Gideon worships God, builds an altar, and destroys the idols in his life and his family
- Gideon is plagued by lack of faith, but still follows the Lord
- The Lord strips Israel of all self-assurances by making their army miniscule in size
- The Lord leads his people to victory

II. LOSS OF VICTORY TAKES PLACE WHEN WE ABANDON GOD (6:1-5)

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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.

Again, we see Israel doing evil in the sight of the Lord. We know this description is primarily given when they leave the worship of the Lord and begin worshipping and serving the false gods and idols of the pagan peoples.

The Lord raises Midian to come destroy Israel. This is different from what we have seen before because the Midianites and their nomad companions do not rule Israel.

These groups come and steal Israel's cattle and eviscerate their harvest, so much so that Israel is forced to move into the mountains whenever the group comes around.

In this scenario we see Israel having lost the victorious living they had under Debra.

When we abandon the Lord, we are guaranteed to lose whatever victorious living we previously enjoyed.

I'm sure the people were in those caves and dens in the mountains complaining about what had been taken from them.

But we must be clear here. Israel was not so much robbed of their victory as they were guilty of forfeiting their victory.

How often have we found ourselves complaining about the blessings we don't have, and the blessings others do have?

Often, we don't see ourselves as having forfeited God's blessings because we have abandoned some aspect of our faith. We treat others who are blessed as having stolen our blessings.

We cannot forfeit the blessings and then complain about the loss.

We need to explain what is meant by victorious living or living a life of victory because so many "name it and claim it" and the false prosperity gospel has tainted the Bible's view of victorious Christian living.

a. Define the Victorious Life

The victorious Christian life is not one of prominence or prestige, but of lowliness and joy. Lowliness brings us close to Jesus and our joy is made complete in him.

The victorious Christian life finds its existence and sustenance in Jesus, not this world.

The victorious Christian life is characterized by a love for Christ and others and a desire to know Christ deeper and make him known.

The Israelites thought success was fitting in with others, living for temporary pleasures, and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

But what happened to them happens to all of those who forsake the Lord.

They lost their victory because they misunderstood what victory was and where victory came from.

They thought they brought themselves victory. They thought victory in life resulted from all their hard work, their cleverness to worship the right things, the stamina for hard times even.

They misunderstood that victory was never about satisfaction or success in this world.

Have you misunderstood what victory is for you as a believer?

We do that same.

They may, like us, have even misunderstood the method of victory.

Christian victory is both permanently eternal and continually active in our lives.

Christ has eternally secured our victory in his death and resurrection and continually secures our victory through the Holy Spirit as we draw close to him.

D.L. Moody said, "I have little sympathy with the idea that God comes down to save us, and then leaves us in prison, the slaves of our besetting sins. No; He has come to deliver us, and to give us victory over our evil tempers, our passions, and our lusts. Are you a professed Christian, but one who is a slave to some besetting sin? If you want to get victory over that temper or that lust, go on to know Christ more intimately. He brings deliverance for the past, the present, and the future."

b. Explain How We Lose It

How do we lose the victory in this Christian life?

We must remember what we just said, "victory is both eternal and continuous."

We can be eternally victorious through Christ but walk in defeat.

How does this happen?

This is not as complicated as we would like to imagine.

We forfeit the victorious Christian life when we pull away from Jesus.

When we pull away from Jesus, from his intimate union, from his warm embrace, we open the door for sin to come in and take up residence in our lives.

If we allow sin to feel at home in our heart more than we do Christ we quickly find ourselves living in a house in which Jesus is on the outside and with him, our victory.

We lose the victory of the Christian life when we pull away from the embrace of Christ and embrace sin.

What about you this morning? When I talk about pulling away from Christ, do you know exactly what I am talking about?

When you hear of forfeiting victory, can you picture the moment or series of actions that have led to you giving up your victory?

We mistake the eternal victory in Christ for the continual victory in Christ.

Charles Swindoll has some wisdom for us here.

Victory is available, but not automatic. The strength we need is there to be claimed but we should never think of the Christian life as "instant success." Unlike the lonely runner on the track, the Christian who conquers does so "through Him who loved us." Jesus is always with us and we have His promise He will not leave us. Victory does not happen to us while we passively wait.... If you are to achieve your goals, you must be involved to the maximum extent. – Chuck Swindoll

And that maximum extent is drawing close to Jesus.

So how do we rebuild a victorious life in Christ?

III. REBUILDING A VICTORIOUS LIFE HAPPENS WHEN WE:

- a. Acknowledge and Repent of Our Sin
- b. Trust in the Lord
- c. Live in Obedience to the Word of God

o Acknowledge and Repent of Our Sin (6:6-10)

⁶So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the Lord.⁷ Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, ⁸that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. ⁹I 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, ¹⁰and 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.'"

The Midianites decimated the Israelites and ravaged their land, all because of their sin.

The text tells us they were brought very low because of the Midianites.

And because they were brought low, they were able to then look up and cry out to the Lord.

How many of you know that for many of us it takes the Lord bringing us low to get us to a point where we are looking up to him. And he will keep driving you lower and lower until you do.

They cried out to the Lord, but God's response this time is different.

Instead of rescuing right out, God sends a prophet to remind them of his word.

When we are caught up in the effects of sin in our lives, we don't need a new word from the Lord, we need to be reminded of what he has already told us.

It is God's word that remind us of his holiness and when we remember his holiness, we are confronted with our sin.

But in this we do not despair too long. For while sin should always cause a despair in the heart of the child of God, this despair should drive us straight to Jesus where we have blessed union with him, and we experience his tender embrace.

What about you? Is there lingering sin in your life right now? In your heart? Toward your spouse? Toward another? Toward God?

Victory is not won because of a lack of sin. Victory is won when the sinner continually runs to Jesus.

The first step to victory is acknowledging and repenting of our sin.

If we want true victory in our lives, in our families, in our schools, in this church, and in this community, we must be a people who continually run to Jesus with our sin and in doing so we encounter an ocean of grace, mercy, and love.

The second step to living a victorious Christian life is to trust in the Lord.

- **Trust in the Lord (6:11-24)**

*¹¹ Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. ¹² The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior." ¹³ Then Gideon said to him, "**O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? 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."*

*¹⁴ The Lord looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?" ¹⁵ He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? **Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house.**" ¹⁶ But the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man." ¹⁷ So Gideon said to Him, "**If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me.**" ¹⁸ Please do not depart from here, until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."*

SKIP TO VERSE 22

*²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." ²³ The Lord said to him, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die." ²⁴ Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it *The Lord is Peace*. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

What we see here is unique in the Old Testament. The angel of the Lord in this passage is what Bible scholars call a theophany-Christ appearing in human form in the Old Testament. There are

several reasons to suggest this, one of which is the Hebrew words used to describe the angel of the Lord, and Gideon's response to bring an offering and subsequently build an altar for this person.

If this is Jesus in the Old Testament, it is the only occurrence of God himself calling a judge.

Notice a few things about this situation.

God found Gideon hiding from his enemies.

When God called Gideon, Gideon didn't want the call because he said he was the weakest person in the weakest clan of Israel.

Over and over throughout the text God had to reassure Gideon of who he was and what he wanted him to do.

Gideon is not an example of faith and trust, but a man who lacked faith and trust.

Notice the funniest and saddest thing about Gideon which is often identical to what happens in our lives.

When Jesus approached him, Gideon said, "God why is all this happening to us?"

Gideon knew exactly why it was happening because the prophet came and told them why it was happening-because of their sin.

Gideon still did not want to walk in the victory Jesus was giving him.

He wanted sign after sign, assurance after assurance.

We are not so different. We will go down a path we know is not right for us, we know is against God's will for us, and then when God tries to steer us back on track, we demand a "sign" to make sure this is his will.

We need to stop demanding temporary signs from God and trust in the eternal word of God.

We will never experience victory in our lives if we do not trust God.

If we fail to trust in God's goodness, grace, and love, we will never be obedient to his word for us.

God doesn't need to tell us about the same thing in 13 different ways. He has already given us all we need for life and godliness in his word.

We don't need new; we need to be renewed.

The third part of living a victorious life after repenting of our sin and trusting in God is to be obedient to the Word of God.

- **Are Obedient to the Word of God (6:25-27)**

²⁵ Now on the same night the Lord said to him, "Take your father's bull and a second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it; ²⁶ and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of this stronghold in an orderly manner, and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down." ²⁷ Then Gideon took ten men of

his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him; and because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day, he did it by night.

Gideon asked God why such bad things were happening to the nation when his own daddy had an altar to the false God's set up in his front yard.

Jesus called on Gideon to tear down the altar to the false God and create an altar to the One True God.

Even though Gideon lacked full faith and was afraid, (he did the deed at night), he still obeyed.

Before God gave victory to Gideon and to the people of Israel, he wanted them to cut down the idols in their lives.

In following God's will and his word, for they are never separate, God will call you to cut down the idols in your life and in your family's life.

What idols have you set up in your life? What are you giving more attention to than is healthy and necessary? What is taking away your ability to worship and serve God? How are you spending your money? On the idols of self and satisfaction or on the eternal kingdom of God?

We cannot be faithfully obedient to the Word of God and simultaneously worship idols.

Our love for Christ is displayed in our obedience to his word.

God called Gideon to tear down the idols in the camp and set up an altar to worship him.

Jesus will call you to be obedient and construct new ways of worship-the one true God in place of the false idols you previously worshipped.

- Family prayer
- Church
- Bible study
- Faith discussions

Are you obediently following Christ in your life right now?

Are there false idols of worship set up that need to be torn down?

Are you faithfully following the Word of God in your life?

When we repent of our sin, trust in the Lord, and are obedient to the Bible, God will bring victory back to our lives.

And the beautiful part about this pattern is we can continue to practice it throughout our lives, and we can teach and encourage others to live this out as well.

Sin will always be a problem for sinful people.

May we be the kind of sinner who run quickly to Jesus instead of diving deeper into sin.

IV. CONCLUSION

What we have seen from Judges 6 and the first part of Gideon's story is that sin is real.

Often, we do not like to name our sin or even acknowledge our sin.

Failing to acknowledge our sin keeps us from being able to be rescued and keeps us from living victoriously in Christ.

Then, other times, when we do acknowledge our sin, it is only because the consequences are more than we bargained for.

We are regretful of our decisions, but not penitent of our sin.

We must move past regret to repentance.

As the team comes, I want to ask you to stand with me please.

As we practice repentance, we are shown the grace and the glory of Christ, and we place our faith in him and follow him in obedience and are rescued from the prison of our sin.

We then can walk in the victory he has provided us.

Maybe you are here this morning, and you find yourself living more in regret for poor decisions than in repentance.

Because of that you have not found the freedom of Christ. You are living more in defeat than victorious.

Christ redeems us from our sin and our regret.

I want to ask you to do the hard thing, the humble thing this morning. I want to call you to repent this morning.

Repentance is difficult because it requires us to acknowledge our lacking and our dependance, but in doing so we discover the glorious grace of Jesus.

Would you like to discover the grace of Jesus this morning?

Would like to be rescued and learn to live a victorious life in Christ?

Repent, turn to Christ, and discover the richness of the fellowship of Jesus himself.

Our call this morning is a call to Christ. This call goes out to all of us, both the individuals who find themselves outside of Jesus and the individuals who know him.