

SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

Judges 6:1-7:23

INTRODUCTION: In Judges chapters 6 and 7, I think we have a story of spiritual success. And the story is the success of someone who, in the eyes of the world, could not be successful. But the Lord normally works that way. He takes someone who should not be successful, in the eyes of the world, and He makes them successful for Him.

Let's notice the setting. Israel is in the hands of the Midianites and have been for seven years. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord as we note in the first part of chapter six (6:1). During this time God used Judges to lead His people. The interesting thing about these Judges is that not one of the chosen deliverers had anything whereof to glory in the flesh.

Gideon was the youngest of an obscure family in the smallest tribe of Israel (6:15-16), yet God decided that He could use him at this time. When God wants to use someone, all they need to do is be willing and God will use them regardless of whether anyone else thinks they are usable or not.

Turn to 1Cor.1:27-28 with me. You see, God can use a "nothing" who is willing to be used.

We need more spiritually successful Christians. I think one of the main problems is that many people don't think that God can use them. But God used Gideon, the youngest of an obscure family in the smallest tribe of Israel, and He can use

you. So we see that being spiritually successful is not within ourselves, it is of God.

To be spiritually successful we must apply God's formula for success.

If you want spiritual success don't try the world's formula. That won't get you anywhere in the kingdom of God. Spiritual success comes by spiritual principles and they work regardless of ability or wealth or popularity or the lack thereof. They work because God works them.

Once Gideon realized this he applied God's formula for success and he began working to accomplish what God wanted accomplished. Yes, the Biblical formula does include work, work for the Lord. The dictionary is the only place where "success" is found before "work." God wants us to work, but He wants us to work His way. Let's notice Gideon's success and God's formula for it.

I. GIDEON CONVERSED WITH THE LORD (6:11-23)

This is always step number one for spiritual success. You must get in touch with the Lord. Too many times we decide what we are going to do and ask God to bless it when we ought to ask God first what He wants us to do.

A. HE DROPPED WHAT HE WAS DOING (v.11)

When it came time to talk to the Lord, Gideon dropped what he was doing. You see, when the Lord speaks to

you and when it's time for you to speak to Him, it does not matter what you are doing, the most important thing at hand is getting in touch with God.

B. HE DOUBTED GOD'S CONTROL (vv.12-14)

Gideon had trouble believing that God could use him. Here we see a farmer threshing wheat by the wine press, the youngest of an obscure family in the smallest tribe of Israel and the Angel of the Lord called him "Thou mighty man of valour!" You can imagine Gideon's misgivings. What we don't realize is that when we yield to the Lord, He fights for us and all of us are mighty men of valor.

C. HE DISCLOSED HIS WEAKNESS (v.15)

Gideon told the Lord he didn't think he could do the job that the Lord wanted done. I don't think I am the right man for the job is what Gideon was hinting. But if God is in it, we can succeed.

D. HE DETERMINED WHO HE WAS TALKING TO (vv.16-23) (*v.22)

Gideon was not talking to just any angel. He was talking to "The Angel of the Lord" (v.12). This is another theophany. There was an earlier preincarnate manifestation of the third person of the Trinity in Judges 2:1ff when Jesus appeared to Joshua and the people of Israel. Now he appears to Gideon who finally realizes who he is talking to (v.22).

We need to do the same thing. If we are in touch with

Almighty God, we can go forth in His power and not doubt our ability to succeed.

II. GIDEON CONSTRUCTED AN ALTER TO THE LORD

(vv.24-27) After Gideon talked to the Lord face to face, he built an alter to Him. Look at Romans 12:1. It tells us to do the same thing with our own bodies.

After we meet face to face with the Lord, we will want to build an alter to the Lord and offer ourselves as a sacrifice to Him. But it is obvious that there are many Christians who are not dead to self. Maybe it is because they are not meeting with the Lord like they should.

III. GIDEON CAST DOWN THE ALTER OF BAAL (vv.28-35)

There is a positive and a negative side to righteousness. Gideon not only build an alter to the Lord, but he also tore down the alter to Baal. Many Christians say that they have offered themselves as a sacrifice to the Lord, but it is obvious that they are not dead to self because there is too much of Baal still left in their life.

If we really take care of positive righteousness, by offering ourselves to the Lord, we will also take care of the negative aspect by getting rid of worldly things in our life. We will want to. And you can't really have one without the other. Romans 12:2a says, "And be not conformed to this world."

IV. GIDEON CONFIRMED THE LORD'S WILL (vv.36-40)

We need more Christians who take the time to find out exactly what God wants them to do. Some don't want to know. It may involve study or work or moving or a change of plans. But we will never be spiritually successful until we find God's will for our life.

I know there is debate here as to whether Gideon was right to put out the fleece. And maybe he did still lack a little faith. But one thing we can say about Gideon is that he was interested in knowing God's perfect will and he put forth much effort to find it out. It is clear that Gideon wanted God's will to be done. And God did answer him, didn't He?

We may not be sure of what God wants, but if we want to find His will -- to the point of talking to Him, and building an altar to Him and tearing down the altar of Baal -- He will show us His will. Romans 12:2b says, "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

V. GIDEON COMPLETED THE LORD'S WILL (7:1-23)

He may have had some reservations and doubts before, but once he knew God's will, he set out to accomplish it.

A. HE MADE THE PREPARATIONS (vv.1-8)

Even when we find out God's will for our life, many times He wants us to prepare before we do it. Gideon

made preparation.

1. HE ROSE UP EARLY (v.1) Spiritual success is for those who start their day early with the Lord. There is too much to do to stay in bed. Get up in time to meet the Lord before work, before school, before the battle, before anything else.

2. HE GOT ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP (v.1) The only way to get on top of the circumstances is to meet the Lord face to face at the top of the morning. Most of us face the day grouchy, ugly, hungry, sleepy, miserable, without the Lord. How could we ever have spiritual success that way? Get on the mountain top before you start out the day.

3. HE FOUND OUT WHO WAS WITH HIM (2-8) Before going to battle, find out who is on your side and who is not. God whittled down the size of Gideon's army so they would never make the mistake of taking credit for themselves. But even if you are alone with God you still have the majority. We must prepare to do God's will for our life.

B. HE PROVIDED THE EXAMPLE (vv.9-18) (*v.17)

How many Christians can make the statement made in verse 17? What a testimony. When our young people want to know how to serve the Lord, parents should be

able to say, "Just watch me! I'll be your example." But most of us are saying, "Do what I say, not what I do." We must be the example of spiritual success.

C. HE WON THE VICTORY (vv.19-23)

When God's formula is applied, the victory is always ours. You know the story, I'm sure.

CONCLUSION: God has promised spiritual success to those who are willing to be used by God. Look at 1Cor. 1 again, verses 27-31 this time. What a passage!

The Israelites went over because they sought their promises. The Egyptians went under because they sought their property.

To be spiritually successful we must apply God's formula for success. If you get interested in self, you will be a total failure. But if you get interested in the Savior, then you will be a success.