

# Strength in Weakness

## Introduction

We are talking about what it looks like to live like a citizen of the Kingdom of God while living in a pagan, foreign world. It isn't easy, because just about everything in the Kingdom of God is opposite of how things are in the world in which we live.

**We are all called to be in the world, but not of the world.**

This week are are looking at the idea of "Strength in Weakness". In order to be strong, you must be weak.

**To get to it, we are going to look at the life of Gideon who was one of the weakest heroes to ever live.**

## Mighty Man of Valor

*As per usual, Israel has forgotten God and begun to worship other gods. To discipline them, God allows the armies of Midian to attack Israel and overcome them. The people of Israel have been forced out of their home and towns and into caves. Whenever they grow crops, the crops are stolen.*

**And so we find Gideon hiding in the threshing floor, threshing wheat hoping no one finds him.**

**READ Judges 6:11-12**

When the Angel of the LORD calls Gideon a "mighty man of valor", is he simply recognizing his potential?

On what basis is God calling him this? Certainly not based on his current activity. What then?

Does ever "recognize" anything? No way. God already knows everything. There isn't anything He doesn't know. He doesn't learn.

God is also in total control in His sovereignty.

**When God calls him a mighty man of valor, He is not responding to Gideon's actions, nor is He being hopeful about His potential. When God labels something, He is speaking as the Creator God. The one that called light into being with a word. He is not an observer. He is a creator. When God calls you an overcomer, He isn't speaking out of hope or faith. He is declaring it as so with the same power and authority that put the stars in their place.**

*Nor is God looking into the future, seeing that Gideon becomes a mighty man of valor and then returning like Marty McFly to tell Gideon that he's going to be great.*

*Whatever God says you are, you are. Despite your weakness, despite your lack of potential or excess in potential.*

## READ Judges 6:13-24

**We find out later that two of his older brothers have been brutally murdered by the Midianites.**

Gideon is a little obtuse, like many of us would have been, but works through his issues with God after the angel of the Lord proves Himself.

## Gideon Called to Cleanse Israel

God gives Gideon a job to do. He asks him to tear down the altar to Baal and the Asherah pole used to worship Baal on his father's own property. He is to use his father's bulls to pull it down.

Gideon does it, but is afraid and so does it at night.

This all goes fairly well, even though Gideon's father has to defend him against men that want to kill him because of what he did.

## Gideon Hard to Convince

Gideon now approaches God and wants to test to see if God is really saying what He is saying.

## READ Judges 6:36-40

He goes to his hiding place, the threshing floor, and does two tests:

1. Wool fleece on the ground. Asks that the fleece be wet in the morning, but the ground dry.
2. Then reconsiders, and asks for the ground to be wet and the fleece dry the next morning.

**God does as he asks, even though He doesn't have to.**

## God Weakens Gideon's Army

Gideon assembles 32,000 people to fight the Midianites. This is a small army compared to the Midianites, but it's all they had and God had promised that they would be victorious despite their small size.

## READ Judges 7:1-8

*Verse 2 is the key to this passage, and also the key to Gideon's life which he ultimately never really took to heart, as we will see by the way Gideon's life ultimately ends up.*

**Could it be that God would sometimes diminish your resources in order to get more glory and to fortify our hearts against pride that would try to steal God's glory?**

**THINK ABOUT IT. God was intentionally limiting Gideon's potential.**

*Maybe you don't have everything you need to accomplish what God has called you to accomplish, and that's how God wants it, and it's how He has intentionally designed your life to be. In fact, maybe He is limiting your potential so that when you do the great things He has called you to do, you will not be able to do anything but give Him all the glory.*

## Gideon Wins the Battle

**READ Judges 7:9-22**

God tells Gideon to sneak up and spy on the enemy camp where he overhears a dream that a soldier had that Gideon would destroy them.

*Gideon then hatches a plan to surround the enemy at night, blow their trumpets and expose their torches all at once. The Midianites are surprised and afraid and run, killing many of each other in the process.*

## Strength in Weakness

**But wait! Isn't God supposed to make my life better?** Actually, yes. The question is, whose potential would you rather live in. Your potential or God's? Your strength or His?

**READ Isaiah 40:28-31**

**READ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

*Paul indicates that his "thorn in the flesh" would remain because God was allowing it to keep him humble. God was limiting Paul's human potential so that Paul could live in God's potential as well as ensure that God got all the glory from Paul's accomplishments.*

**This is only troublesome when we are thinking only as citizens of earth, and not as citizens of the kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God the future is our greatest and best hope. Our lives now are to be lived as deposits into that kingdom.**

*In other words, we strive to live this life in the way we will live the next - for the glory of God alone (soli deo gloria). It's a very old Christian phrase that is still at the core of the meaning of life.*

**The beautiful irony of it is that when we allow God to limit our potential, only then will we discover His strength. This is the paradox of life in the Kingdom of God. When we embrace our limitations and our weakness, even boasting in them, we are the strongest we can ever be. It's counterintuitive, but there is simply no other way to do the various things God has called you to do.**

## What Happened to Gideon

**READ Judges 7:23**

**This is where things begin down the slippery slope for Gideon.**

1. He pursues his defeated enemy, which God did not tell him to do
2. He begins gathering his army back together that God had disbanded.

From here on until his death (at a nice old age), Gideon is gathering armies and supporters to himself.

*He pursues the Midianites deep into their territory and eventually captures them and takes off their heads.*

**Along the way the city of Succoth and Penual do not give them food for fear that Gideon will fail and Midian will punish them. Gideon returns after his victory and...**

- captures a man from Succoth and tortures him until he gives up the names of 77 officials and elders of Succoth.
- He then entered Succoth with his army and tortured these men with briars from the wilderness.
- He then went to Penual and tore down their tower and killed all the men of the city
- He takes revenge on the two captured rulers of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, for his murdered older brothers. He orders his son to do it, and he can't draw his sword, so Gideon does it.

**Obviously, this is a new Gideon. But not in a positive direction. The desire for the glory found in power, wealth, honor, and in the dealing out of vengeance has taken darkened Gideon's heart.**

## Invited to be King

### Judges 8:22-23

*22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, **for you have saved us** from the hand of Midian." 23 Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you."*

Gideon rightly refuses to be king, but does not correct them in their giving him glory for the rescue instead of God. Instead, the rest of Gideon's life seems to be spent in gathering glory unto himself.

**He takes gold given to him by the people and fashions a golden ephod, puts it in his home town, where people go and worship it.**

Though he refused the title of king, he continues to act like one. He continues to gather power and might, and receive the credit for his success until his death.

### Judges 8:33-35

*33 As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. 34 **And the people of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side,** 35 and they did not show steadfast love to the family of Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.*

## Closing

**Are you willing to be weak in order to be strong? Are you willing to submit to God's limitation on your potential so that you can live in His potential?**

### **Two Enemies of Weakness**

1. SHAME - hiding your weakness, because it seems too weak.
2. AMBITION - scrambling to gather more strength because deep down in your heart you want glory

**We overcome BOTH of these enemies of weakness at the cross of Christ. No one has ever received the grace of God while still clenching their own strength. When you approach the throne of the King, you approach with a bow not with a swagger.**

Jesus loves to rid you of your false strength when you bring it to Him. He will show you how weak you really are. And He'll show you how strong you can be in Him. He will bring honor to your weakness so that the shame no longer has any power over you. He will mercifully expose your weakness so that selfish ambition no longer drives you.

**But you have to bring it to Him. You aren't strong enough to deal with it!**