

• *Israel sins again*

For the fourth time Israel sinned, and God handed them over to their enemies, this time to the Midianites.

☞¹ 6:1

• *Familiar pattern of chastening continues*

God chastens His people's sins. The familiar pattern of sin followed-by-chastening continued in Israel ☞¹. Once again Israel's predicament was a desperate one. The Israelites were hiding in caves ☞². Their enemies would invade at the time when Israel were sowing their seed. Then (since some small amount of seed was planted despite the attacks) they would attack again at harvest time ☞³. It was a deliberate policy, full of hatred, designed to reduced Israel to extreme poverty and weakness. When the Midianites invaded, Amalekites and other eastern people joined in. Together the enemies came in vast numbers to devastate the land ☞⁴; Israel was in a joyless and distressing situation. It was God's way of putting pressure on the people to get them to pray☞⁵. When we slip into prayerlessness God is able to drive us to prayer. Our troubles exert pressure on us and might lead us to pray as never before.

☞¹ See 3;7, 12; 4:1
☞² 6:2

• *The Midianites and Amalekites*

☞³ 6:3

• *God is able to drive us to prayer*

☞⁴ 6:4-5

☞⁵ 6:6

• *God sends a prophet to interpret God's chastening*

God prepares the way for restoration by sending prophecy. The nation's turning to idolatry has been mentioned three times before ☞¹ and we may assume something similar happened in the days of Shamgar ☞². On those four occasions God simply rescued them, but now He first sends a prophet ☞³. Chastening is of no value if it is not interpreted. Actually the prophet does not rebuke them very powerfully. God simply reminds them of what He has done. He delivered them from bondage, released them from oppression and gave them Canaan ☞⁴. He wished them to show their gratitude by not worshipping the gods of the Amorites who lived in Canaan. But they did not heed God's demand ☞⁵. They are sinning against grace, sinning against His amazing mercy.

☞¹ 3:7-11, 12-30, 31; 4: 1-5:31

☞² 3:31

☞³ 6:7

☞⁴ 6:8-9

☞⁵ 6:10

• *God eventually raises up a rescuer- an undistinguished person*

God eventually raises up a rescuer; God calls Gideon. God's instrument is an undistinguished person going about his regular duties ☞¹. An angel appears. It is 'the angel of the Lord', the angel who specially represents Yahweh himself. Gideon has taken his wheat to a winepress, a hollow in the ground, where he hopes that he will not be discovered by any invading Midianites. Normally a farmer would take wheat to be threshed out into the open countryside, but the Midianite danger made that impossible.

☞¹ 6:11

• *Midianite danger*

1. When God calls us He treats us not as we are but as we shall be

1. When God calls us He treats us not as we are but as we shall be. God treats Gideon not as he is but as the military hero that he will be. The angel speaks to Gideon, '*Yahweh is with you, you mighty warrior*' ☞¹! Actually Gideon seems to be anything but a mighty warrior! He is hiding from Midianites. He is perplexed and resentful about Israel's sufferings ☞². He is sceptical, reckoning God has simply abandoned Israel ☞³.

☞¹ 6:12

☞² 6:13

☞³ 6:14

• *A mighty man of valour!*

God reckons Gideon to be a mighty man of valour. Actually he is not that yet, but he will be and God is dealing with Gideon not in terms of what he is but in terms of what he will be.

2. When God calls us he treats us totally in grace

2. When God calls us He treats us totally in grace. God's call disregarded Gideon's sinfulness. Gideon was quite rebellious and cynical in the way in which he answered God. He was in a bitter mood. But God took no notice of that whatsoever. We are 'called with a holy calling' but it is 'not because of anything we have done but because of

• *Salvation comes in the same way – “I pronounce you righteous” says God*

3. We may know God’s call when we find God steadily insisting on His will

his own purpose and grace’ ¹.

Salvation comes to us in the same way. When we trust in Jesus, God says ‘I pronounce you righteous’. We are actually not righteous in ourselves at the time God saves us, but God looks ahead to what we shall be eventually. In heaven we shall be totally sinless. But when we come to faith in Jesus God reckons that righteousness as ours straightaway. ‘Justification’ is God’s treating us not as we are but as we shall be.

3. We may know we are being called by God when we find God steadily insisting on His will. God does not argue with Gideon. When God’s call comes to us we find that God is gently compelling. ‘Go in the strength you have and save Israel . . . Am I not sending you?’ ¹. Gideon does not feel he has much strength. He is hoping no Midianites will find him in his winepress. But God’s call is enough. ‘Go in the strength you have’ says God.

4. When God calls us He disregards weakness

4. When God calls us He disregards weakness. Gideon feels inferior and weak. Manasseh is not known for its military heroism. Gideon’s clan is the weakest in Manasseh. And Gideon is the weakest person in his family ¹! It does not matter to God. God still insists that Gideon must be the rescuer. The enemies of Israel, the Midianites, will be thoroughly defeated in a single event ².

5. When God calls us the beginning of God’s work is to be at peace with Him

5. When God’s call comes, the beginning of the work is to be at peace with Him. God’s assurance begins with Gideon’s asking for a miraculous sign. ‘If you really are choosing me to do this work, show me by some kind of sign that you really are sent from God’, he asks ¹. He wants the angel to accept a sacrifice ². He goes and prepares a meal ³. The angel tells him where to put the meal ⁴. Then He consumes the meal and disappears from sight ⁵. Gideon is stunned. He has seen God and is it well-known that no one can see God and live ⁶. But it is alright. He has not seen the fullness of God’s glory; the angel has been visually representing God in a way that is safe for Gideon. Gideon is reassured that there is peace between him and God ⁷. Gideon builds an altar ⁸. The place became known as ‘Yahweh Shalom’, ‘the LORD is peace’.

• *Gideon is reassured*

• *The LORD is peace*

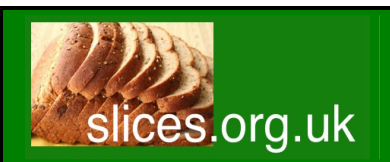
¹ 2 Timothy 1:9

¹ 6:14

¹ 6:15
² 6:16

¹ 6:17
² 6:18
³ 6:19
⁴ 6:20
⁵ 6:21
⁶ 6:22
⁷ 6:23
⁸ 6:24

There is no blessing in serving God unless it begins with our being personally reconciled to Him. Such peace with God comes with a sacrifice – the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ‘the LORD is peace’ for us, and we are ready to serve Him.



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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