

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**May 4, 2016**

- ✓ **Judges 6:11-7:25.** Gideon: from coward to victor to arrogance.
- ✓ **Philippians 2:1-11.** Supernatural virtues of encouragement, compassion, and humility.
- ✓ **Psalms 66:1-20.** Cherishing iniquity shuts down God’s answer to prayer.

**COMMENTS:**

**Judges 6:11-7:25.** This section begins with the call of Gideon by the Angel of the Lord (6:11-24). The Angel of the Lord is a Christophany, which is an appearance of the Lord in human form. He assures Gideon that He is with him (6:12) but Gideon objects to the task by noting his own weakness (15). However, the Lord reassures him that His presence will guarantee him incredible victory as if the Midianites were just “one man” (16). Gideon requested a sign, which was granted (17-21). This amazed Gideon and he built an altar to the Lord (22-24). God proceeded to command Gideon to destroy his father’s altar to Baal with its accompanying Asherah pole, and to replace it with the proper kind of altar to the Lord (25-26). After removing a source of evil temptation from the Israelites, Baal’s altar, God officially commissions Gideon (33-35). However, Gideon, due to lack of faith, seeks another miraculous sign from God. It is important to note that the fleece was not to discover God’s will—for God had already told him what He wanted him to do. Gideon wanted a sign to confirm God’s presence. God condescended to Gideon’s weak faith (36-40). In 7:1-8 we have the reduction of the forces of Gideon in order to make sure it was understood that victory would be due to the Lord, and not the size of Gideon’s force. After being reduced from 32,000 men (7:3) to 300 men, God promises victory through supernatural revelation (7:11-15). This is followed by victory over the Midianites. *However*, having achieved the divinely intended goal with the three hundred core troops, Gideon appeared to forget the point of *Esse’s* reduction of the troops. Instead of operating by faith and seeking guidance from God, he relied on human strength and mobilized the troops of Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh. These, along with the men from Asher who are not listed here, probably consisted of the twenty-two thousand who had been eliminated (7:3). It appears that the coward turned victor had now become arrogant, thinking now it depends upon him for the mopping up operations. However, note that voice of the Lord is quiet, not to be heard for the balance of Gideon’s narrative. And the spirit of the Lord, which brought the courage to fight a far greater military force, seems to slip from Gideon’s consciousness. This is not so unusual, who of us, having received power and provisions by God, start trusting in ourselves once again?

**Philippians 2:1-11.** Note the virtues in the first verse. These are all created by the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the common belief that one must go through difficulties before one can have true compassion (which may have an element of truth on a natural level), these virtues of affection and compassion are produced by God the Holy Spirit supernaturally and are not dependent upon human experience. One does not have to go through difficulties to have spiritual compassion. Moreover, it has been my experience that those who do go through difficulties usually become less compassionate as they become more hardened. Consider the change in the Apostle Paul's life as he went from killing Christians to loving sacrificing the rest of his life for them. He did not gain this compassion and love from human experiences. There is no indication anywhere in Scripture that Paul went through hard times before salvation so he could learn to love others. Just the contrary is indicated as he excelled all others and was celebrated. Where did Paul get his supernatural love for believers? from God the Holy Spirit. Where did Paul get the humility to think of others better than himself (2:4)? He did not get it from being humbled in life—so he would gain some natural “capacity” to know what it is like to be under unfair authority. He got it from the Holy Spirit and by *looking* to the example of Jesus Christ as he outlines in the following section in 2:5-8. Let us not confuse natural virtues with supernatural virtues.

**Psalms 66:1-20.** This is a psalm of thanksgiving to God. In fact all of the earth was urged to praise the Lord in light of His “awesome” works. Note the importance of having the right attitude in prayer in verse 18: *If I had seen iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me.* The idea in the Hebrew is of cherishing iniquity as a good thing rather than denouncing it for what it is. It would also cover an apathetic attitude in which iniquity is ignored rather than confessed. He makes it clear that God would not have answered his prayer if he had a wrong attitude toward iniquity.

**Romans 11:36** For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don