

Meet the Press

13 - God's Covert Agents
Church on the Park | Sunday, 14 August 2016

Text: Judges 6:11-12; 7:1-3

Theme: God uses unusual ways to equip you and prepare you for his battles.

Intro: Today, I want to continue to talk about Gideon and the word the Lord gave me, "ARISE." Over the last couple of weeks we've used the word 'ARISE' as an acronym. Can you remember what the letters stand for? A - Awake; R - Repent; I - Initiate; S - Synergise. And today, I we will look at the last letter: E - Equip. In order to arise, you need to let the Lord equip you. But, here's the thing: God equips his people in a strange way. This is something we can see in Judges 7.

[Prophetic Word 9 August 2016: 'I'm expanding your territory and with new territory comes new resistance. You are taking back ground from the evil one. Warn the people to be on guard against the camouflaged serpent that sneaks about twisting people's words. I have given you eyes to see what others would overlook. Behind gossip, slander, speculation and division is Satan setting traps. Remember who the real enemy is. Direct your prayers against the evil one not against one another. My people must stand shoulder to shoulder forming a wall so that the enemy cannot come in. Pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Put into practice, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Ask the Lord to "give us this day his daily bread to feed our souls."']

1) The Lord equips his people through the press (Judges 6:11-12).

- What do I mean by this? I'll explain
- The **setting** where the Lord called Gideon tells us **everything** about the story of Gideon and what God was doing in and through him.
- Gideon was **beating** out **wheat** in a **winepress** near an oak tree in order to **save it** from the **Midianites**.
 - The whole story is **symbolized** in the **oak tree**, **winepress** and **threshing process**.
- This is the last letter '**E**' and it's the **toughest** word of them all.
 - And yet if you are the Lord's child, you've been **going** through this **already**—so it will help **shed light** on what the Lord is doing and encourage you.
- The story of Gideon is about **Pressing** and the **Threshing**. God will bring all his mighty warriors through his pressing and beating process.
- *Do you know how the **winepress** works?*
 - It was a **sunken area** where "the **grape harvest** was thrown and then **trodden** with bare feet, amid **shouts of joy** and traditional vintage work **songs**...the **red juice flowed** through spouts into jars" (Tyndale Dictionary).
- When I was in the **States** the first time this year, I don't think I ever felt **more pressed**. **Pressure from all sides** squeezing me as well as our whole family.
 - But also, in the **midst** of that God gave us **joy**, **laughter**, **faith** and **hope**.
- When God is **equipping a mighty warrior**, he brings them into his **press**. He wants to bring the life of God that's in you out of you.
 - **Jesus** had to go through an olive press, **Gethsemane**. He had to be **pressed** for the **oil of God's life** to come to each of us.

- He was also pressed just like the grapes in a winepress—so pressed that **blood flowed** from his sweat. He was so pressed that he died on the **cross** to take away **our sin** and **shame** caused by that sin (**Luke 22:39-46**).
- This is what the **cup** of **communion** represents: Jesus **blood** was like **wine** that was **pressed** from him. **He met the press and because of him we have great joy.**
- The press is one of God's **mysterious ways**, **covert** b, to make his **life flow** through us. It's his **unusual** way of **equipping** you.
 - A **fountain pen** only writes through **pressure**. First, you need to **fill** up the **well/cartridge** of the pen. Then, when you **press** down, the **ink** flows.
 - God wants to **write** his **story** through you—you **are his pen**, his **instrument**—but he can only write through **applying pressure** to you. The good news is that he only **gently** applies this pressure, like a good writer. Though, the gentle pressure may feel quite rough.
 - The same thing happens with a **writing press**. Words are **pressed** on **paper** so others can read them. Without the press the **news doesn't go out**.

2) The Lord equips you by first stripping the fear from you (Judges 7:1-3)

- When the Lord found Gideon he was **threshing wheat** and the whole story of Gideon is about the threshing process.
 - *Do you know about the process of **threshing**?*
 - Threshing wheat is about **separating** the **wheat** from the **chaff**. It involves a whole process of **beating** and **winnowing** to release the seed, the grain. The wheat has **substance** and **weight**, while the chaff has **no weight** and **little value** to it.
- Now think of the story of Gideon: Gideon is **threshing** the wheat to **save it** from **Midian**, and **God threshes Israel** in order to **save her** from **Midian**.
 - Gideon calls for an army and at first **32,000 men arise**.
 - With 32,000 they are still **out numbered**. The enemy's army was over **one hundred thousand**.
 - And yet, despite the **odds** being **against** them, God wants to **still separate** the wheat from the chaff.
- *What the first thing the Father gets **rid** of?*
 - **FEAR**
 - An example of this is shown in the Torah in the rules of law (**Deu. 20**).
 - **Stress spreads** and **fear** is like a **virus**.
 - **Fear** is the **opposite** of **trusting** God.
 - We all **feel fear**, but you **don't** need to **give in** to it.
 - **Fear** is a **filter** that **distorts** the **voice** of the Father.
 - It's like a **voice transformer**.
 - We see a great example of this in **Jeremiah 42** and Johannah's people.
 - They want to hear the **whole counsel** of God, but when it highlights their fear (Jer. 41:17-18, preconceived notions), they call **Jeremiah** a **liar**.
 - **Fear** was a **root problem** in Israel in Gideon's day. They **feared other gods** rather than the Lord. Judges 6:10 Lit. "But you have not listened to My voice."
 - This caused them not to listen to God's voice.
 - There's no more comforting words that the Lord can say then, "**I am with you!**"

3) The Father equips you by removing your armour to put on his armour (Judges 7:2-3).

- It is through **weakness** that God's power works through you.

- God's **plans** for you are not **affected** by where you come from (Nazareth or the Abiezrites) or how **little** your **resources** are.
 - God's plans and purposes are only brought about by **His power**.
- In the story of Gideon we see what Jesus says, "**Many are called, but few are chosen.**"
 - The **ones** who are **chosen** are the ones who **learn this lesson**.
- God wants to take the little **seed (acorn)** of **Israel** and make it into an **oak tree** of **righteousness**.
 - Therefore, God chooses the **little seed** of **Gideon** to bring a **mighty deliverance**.
- What **you** might **see** as **too little**, **God sees** as **too many**.
 - Judges 7:1-2 - TOO MANY (32,000)
- People always want more. More money. Bigger houses. Bigger Businesses. Bigger armies. Bigger churches. We think more is better.
 - But God wants to separate the wheat from the chaff.
- "For Israel would become boastful, saying, '**My own power** has delivered me.'"
- God also wants to separate the wheat and chaff in your life.
- The process of spiritual maturity is becoming weaker in yourself, so that your power is coming from God, not yourself. "My own power."

Conclusion: The Father uses ways we don't expect to equip us. His goal is to get you to trust in him rather than your own power. Don't be afraid of the press or the threshing, because God is making you into a mighty oak of righteousness.

END NOTES

WINEPRESS A sunken area (Jgs 6:11) into which the grape harvest was thrown and then trodden with bare feet, amid shouts of joy and traditional vintage work songs (Jer 48:33; cf. Is 65:8). The red juice flowed through spouts into jars. Full winepresses meant prosperity; deserted ones spoke of destitution. The common winepress was a natural landmark (Jgs 7:25; Zec 14:10); a privately owned one indicated the special care and efficiency of the vineyard's owner (Is 5:2; Mt 21:33).

Grape treading provided a dramatic metaphor for the ruthless trampling by invading armies (Lam 1:15). This vivid metaphor of battle is mingled with divine judgment (Is 63:1–6) and anticipates the Lord's final judgment, spoken of as "the winepress of the wrath of God" (Rv 14:18–20).

See also Vines, Vineyard; Wine. (Tyndale Dictionary)

Threshing/Harvesting

Small quantities of grain, dill, cumin, and other small crops were beaten out with a flail (Jgs 6:11; Ru 2:17), but most grain was threshed on a floor placed on high ground so that the wind would carry off the chaff. The usual method was to scatter the loosened bundles of straw on the floor and to drive oxen over them to dislodge the grains. Sometimes heavy implements were drawn over the straw (Is 28:27; 41:15). These were weighted by stones and ridden by the driver. The resulting bits of straw, or chaff, were separated from the grain by a tedious winnowing process that involved throwing the material in the air with a fork or shovel (Is 30:24; Jer 15:7). The lighter straw would be blown to the edge of the floor, and the grain would collect at the feet of the worker. The chaff was burned or used as fodder. Grain was sifted (Am 9:9), shoveled into a heap, and later stored in covered pits in the field (Jer 41:8). Sometimes storehouses or granaries were used (Dt 28:8). (Tyndale Dictionary)