



**BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

**EXPOSITORY SERMON**

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**GIDEON – GOD’S INSTRUMENT FOR RENEWAL**

**Scripture Reading – Judges 6:1-25.**

**Introduction**

The book of Judges among other things, talks about Gideon who was God’s instrument for renewal in the nation of Israel. If you had met him he would not have impressed you as the kind of man who God would use to bring a nation back to Himself. But God always surprises us, as to who He uses to fulfill His purposes in this world. In Gideon, He took an ordinary person to do extraordinary things.” God called him to be an instrument of renewal and deliverance in the nation. His story is told in the Book of Judges, the sequel to the Book of Joshua. It begins a new era or period of development of the nation of Israel in the land God had given them. Historically it covers the period of Joshua to judgeship of the Prophet Samuel, and the introduction of the monarchy in the life of the nation. While the Book of Joshua covers about 27 years, the

Book of Judges covers a period of roughly between 330 and 410 years.

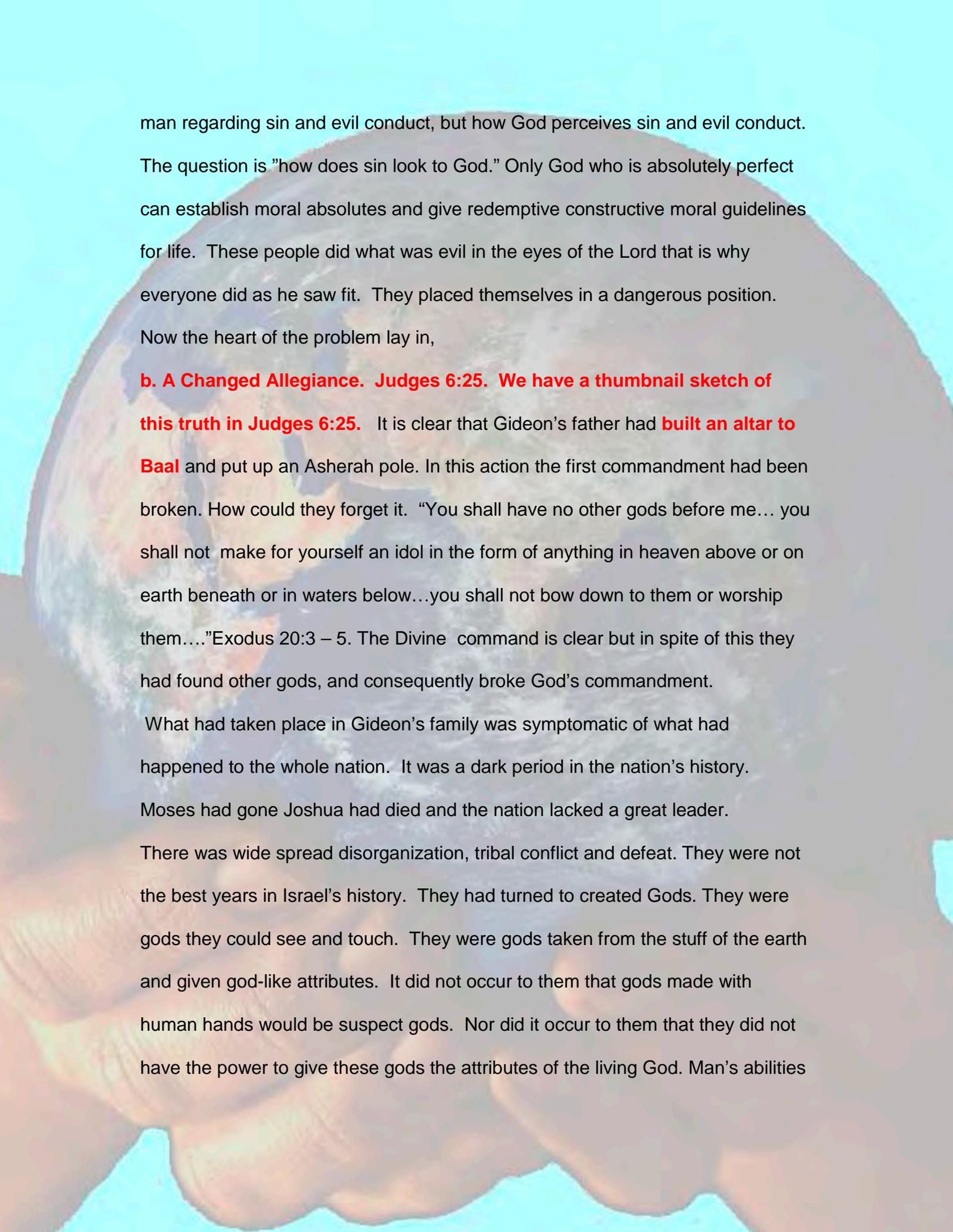
Campbell Morgan points out that it is a story from the human side of disobedience and disaster. The book gives an account of dictators who were primarily military and civil leaders with judicial responsibilities. This period of the judges was not a time of which the children of Israel could be proud. Morgan goes on and says that it was an era of 7 consecutive failures, 7 punishments and 7 deliverances, and it is in during one of these seasons of failure that we discover this unusual man Gideon, who under the power of God's anointing and the direction of God's Spirit, became God's instrument of deliverance of the nation. God took an ordinary person and did extraordinary things through him. What was it that called for the selection of Gideon to bring about the restoration of the nation? It is clear from a reading of this story that there was a process that needed to take place, if renewal and deliverance was to come, and the worship of God was to be re-instated in the nation. There was one fundamental action required to be implemented if this renewal was to take place. This action is summed up in the words found in Judges 6:25 and 26. **"Tear down** your father's altar to Baal and **cut down** the Asherah pole beside it. V26. Then **build up** a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on top of this height. This action started at the home. Tear down your father's altar. There are three crucial phrases here. "Tear down.... cut down and build up proper kind of altar." Immediately the words **"tear down and cut down"** are used you know that the Lord is calling for radical action to be taken in order for His purposes to be fulfilled in the nation. This was not an easy step for Gideon to take, but it was essential for the

deliverance of God's people. Why was renewal and restoration needed at this time? First because of,

### **1. THE CONDITIONS REVEALED IN THE LIFE OF THE NATION. Judge 6:1,24 -25**

The words in verse one make this abundantly clear. "Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord." Clearly they place themselves in

**a. A Dangerous Position. Judges 6:1. "Again they did evil in eyes of the Lord."** It is clear that this doing evil was a habit with these people. Note the **words "again they did evil."** **It is significant to note that what they did was evil in the eyes of the Lord** and not in **the eyes of the people**. Man cannot set the standard of good and evil because being apart from the grace of God, he is essentially evil that is why so many of his values are evil. How then can he set the standard of goodness and holiness? In this book at least six comments are made **"that Israel had no king: and everyone did as he saw fit."** The King James version says that **"every man did that which was right in his own eyes**. His own eyes determined the moral standards for life. We can understand that they did not have the moral stature and righteous character to set down acceptable standards of moral goodness for they did which was evil in their own eyes." **"Their own eyes"** is an extremely poor foundation on which a standard of ethics and principles of righteousness be established. Is this not what our society is doing today? You have heard it said, "If it feels good then do it." And so feelings control our thinking and dominate our conduct and consequently we are on the road to chaotic disaster. The critical issue here is not the perception of

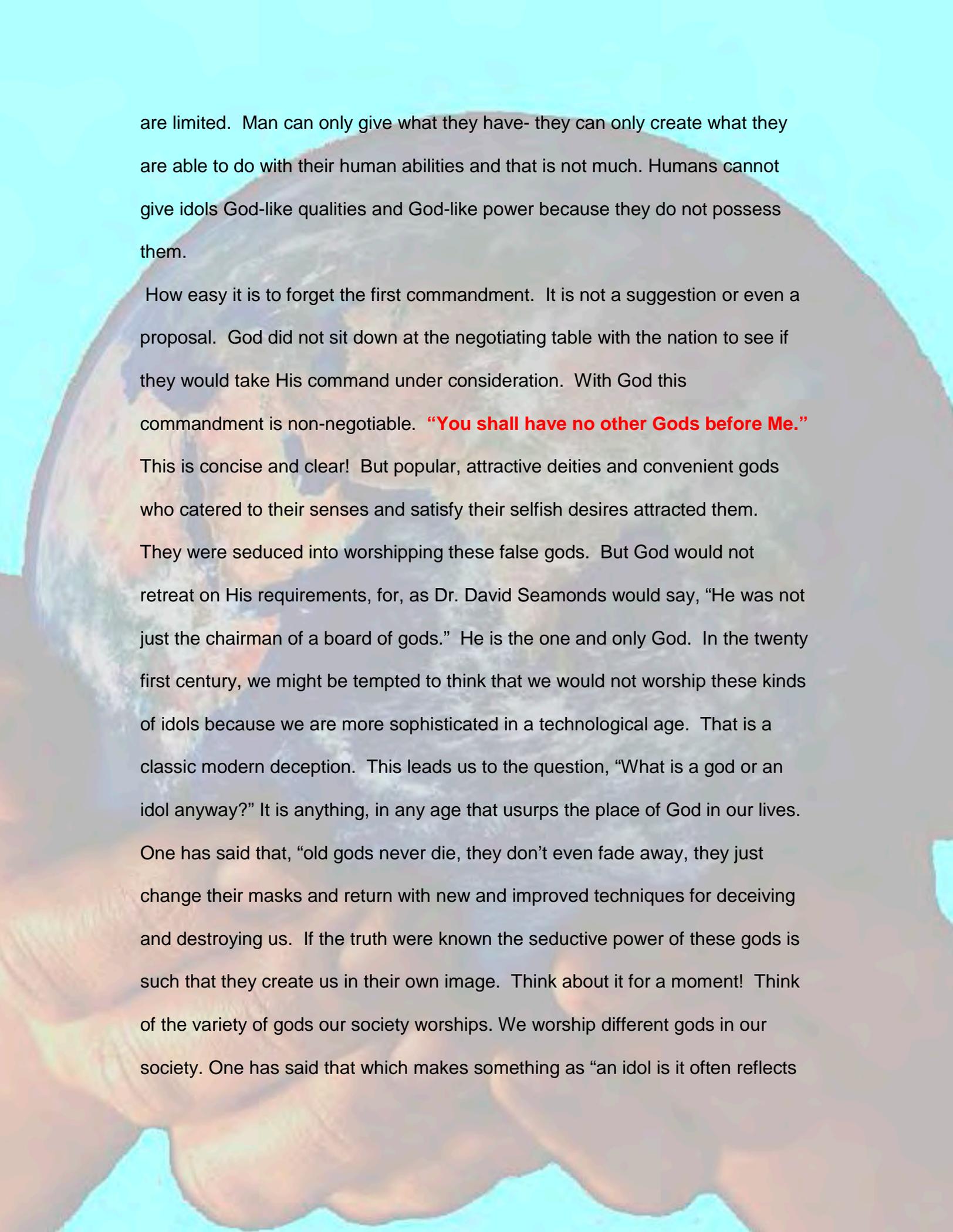


man regarding sin and evil conduct, but how God perceives sin and evil conduct. The question is "how does sin look to God." Only God who is absolutely perfect can establish moral absolutes and give redemptive constructive moral guidelines for life. These people did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord that is why everyone did as he saw fit. They placed themselves in a dangerous position. Now the heart of the problem lay in,

**b. A Changed Allegiance. Judges 6:25. We have a thumbnail sketch of this truth in Judges 6:25.** It is clear that Gideon's father had **built an altar to Baal** and put up an Asherah pole. In this action the first commandment had been broken. How could they forget it. "You shall have no other gods before me... you shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in waters below...you shall not bow down to them or worship them...."Exodus 20:3 – 5. The Divine command is clear but in spite of this they had found other gods, and consequently broke God's commandment.

What had taken place in Gideon's family was symptomatic of what had happened to the whole nation. It was a dark period in the nation's history. Moses had gone Joshua had died and the nation lacked a great leader.

There was wide spread disorganization, tribal conflict and defeat. They were not the best years in Israel's history. They had turned to created Gods. They were gods they could see and touch. They were gods taken from the stuff of the earth and given god-like attributes. It did not occur to them that gods made with human hands would be suspect gods. Nor did it occur to them that they did not have the power to give these gods the attributes of the living God. Man's abilities



are limited. Man can only give what they have- they can only create what they are able to do with their human abilities and that is not much. Humans cannot give idols God-like qualities and God-like power because they do not possess them.

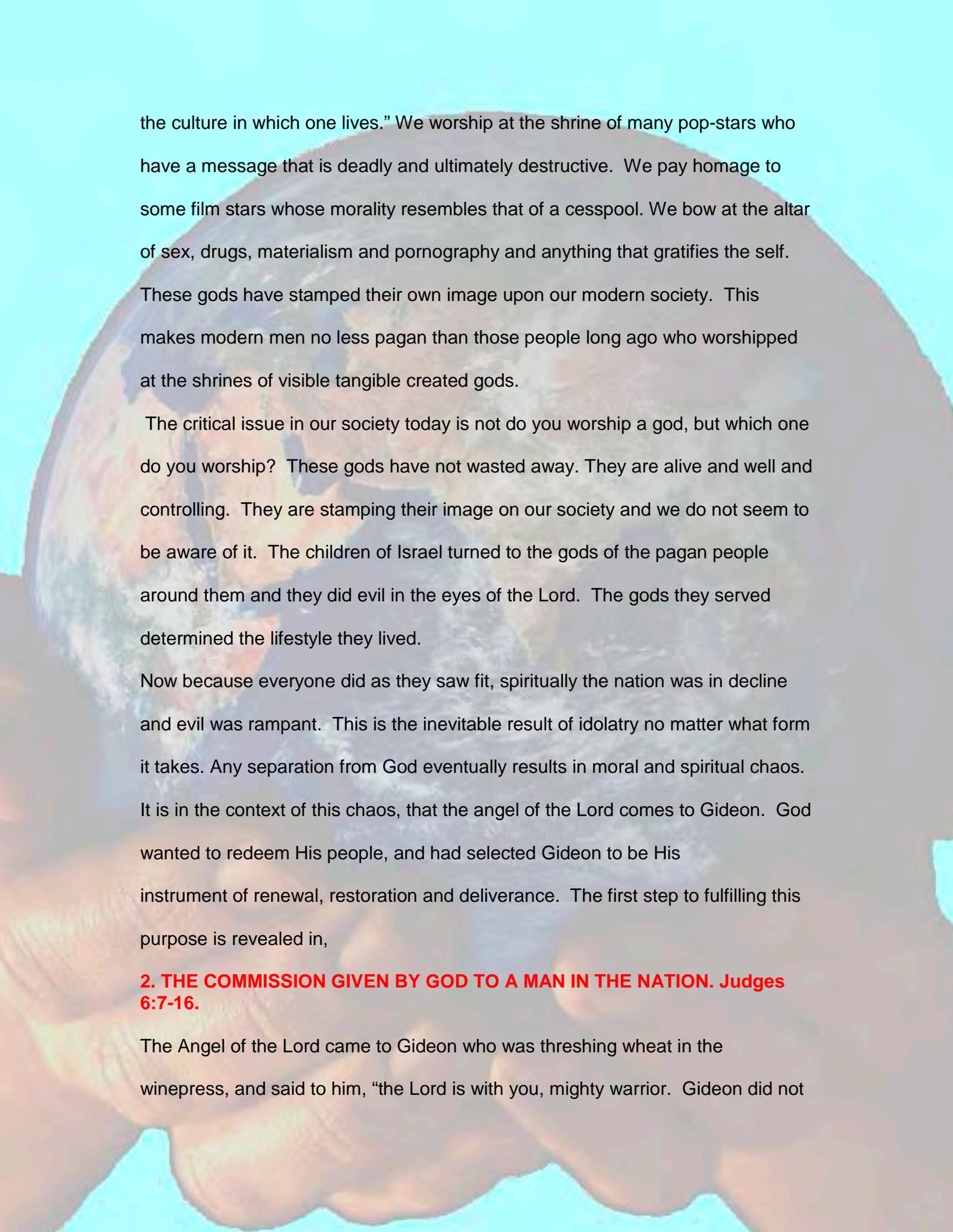
How easy it is to forget the first commandment. It is not a suggestion or even a proposal. God did not sit down at the negotiating table with the nation to see if they would take His command under consideration. With God this

commandment is non-negotiable. **“You shall have no other Gods before Me.”**

This is concise and clear! But popular, attractive deities and convenient gods who catered to their senses and satisfy their selfish desires attracted them.

They were seduced into worshipping these false gods. But God would not retreat on His requirements, for, as Dr. David Seamonds would say, “He was not just the chairman of a board of gods.” He is the one and only God. In the twenty first century, we might be tempted to think that we would not worship these kinds of idols because we are more sophisticated in a technological age. That is a classic modern deception. This leads us to the question, “What is a god or an idol anyway?” It is anything, in any age that usurps the place of God in our lives.

One has said that, “old gods never die, they don’t even fade away, they just change their masks and return with new and improved techniques for deceiving and destroying us. If the truth were known the seductive power of these gods is such that they create us in their own image. Think about it for a moment! Think of the variety of gods our society worships. We worship different gods in our society. One has said that which makes something as “an idol is it often reflects



the culture in which one lives.” We worship at the shrine of many pop-stars who have a message that is deadly and ultimately destructive. We pay homage to some film stars whose morality resembles that of a cesspool. We bow at the altar of sex, drugs, materialism and pornography and anything that gratifies the self. These gods have stamped their own image upon our modern society. This makes modern men no less pagan than those people long ago who worshipped at the shrines of visible tangible created gods.

The critical issue in our society today is not do you worship a god, but which one do you worship? These gods have not wasted away. They are alive and well and controlling. They are stamping their image on our society and we do not seem to be aware of it. The children of Israel turned to the gods of the pagan people around them and they did evil in the eyes of the Lord. The gods they served determined the lifestyle they lived.

Now because everyone did as they saw fit, spiritually the nation was in decline and evil was rampant. This is the inevitable result of idolatry no matter what form it takes. Any separation from God eventually results in moral and spiritual chaos. It is in the context of this chaos, that the angel of the Lord comes to Gideon. God wanted to redeem His people, and had selected Gideon to be His instrument of renewal, restoration and deliverance. The first step to fulfilling this purpose is revealed in,

## **2. THE COMMISSION GIVEN BY GOD TO A MAN IN THE NATION. Judges 6:7-16.**

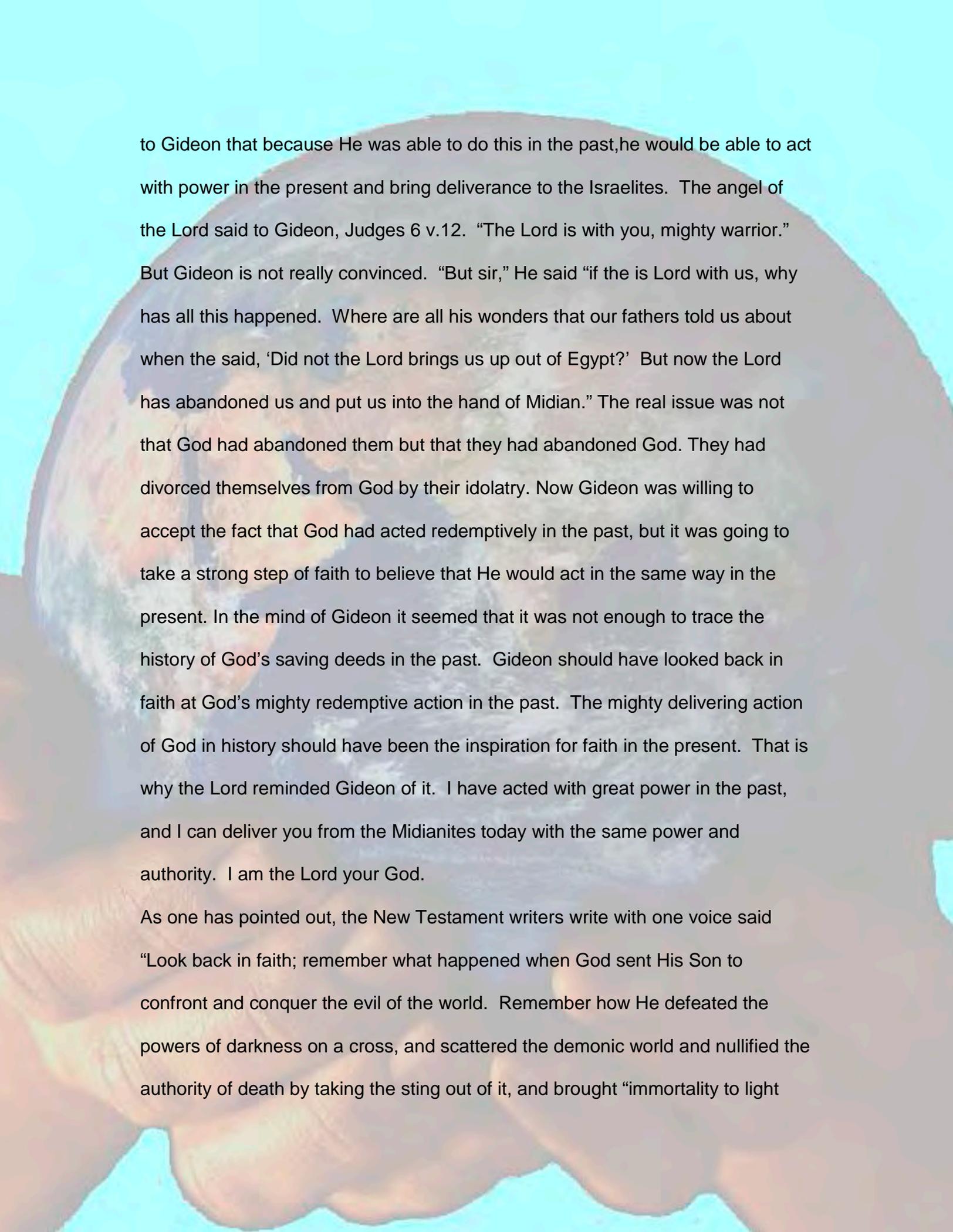
The Angel of the Lord came to Gideon who was threshing wheat in the winepress, and said to him, “the Lord is with you, mighty warrior. Gideon did not

feel mighty or powerful at this moment. He began a conversation not unlike the conversation that Moses with God had when God from a burning bush called him to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt. The Lord turned to Gideon and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of the hand of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" This Divine promise should have immediately encouraged Gideon, for the Midianites were powerful and were oppressing them. God had chosen Gideon to be his instrument of deliverance. This was God's clear commission to Gideon, and it was part of an extremely important conversation that the Angel of the Lord had with Gideon. What is the essence of this conversation. The message is revealing. What God conveys to Gideon is important for He revealed who He was. This is

**a. The Foundation on which this Commission Rests. Judges 6:8-9.** He does to Gideon what He always does in the Old Testament. He reveals Himself **in two ways.**

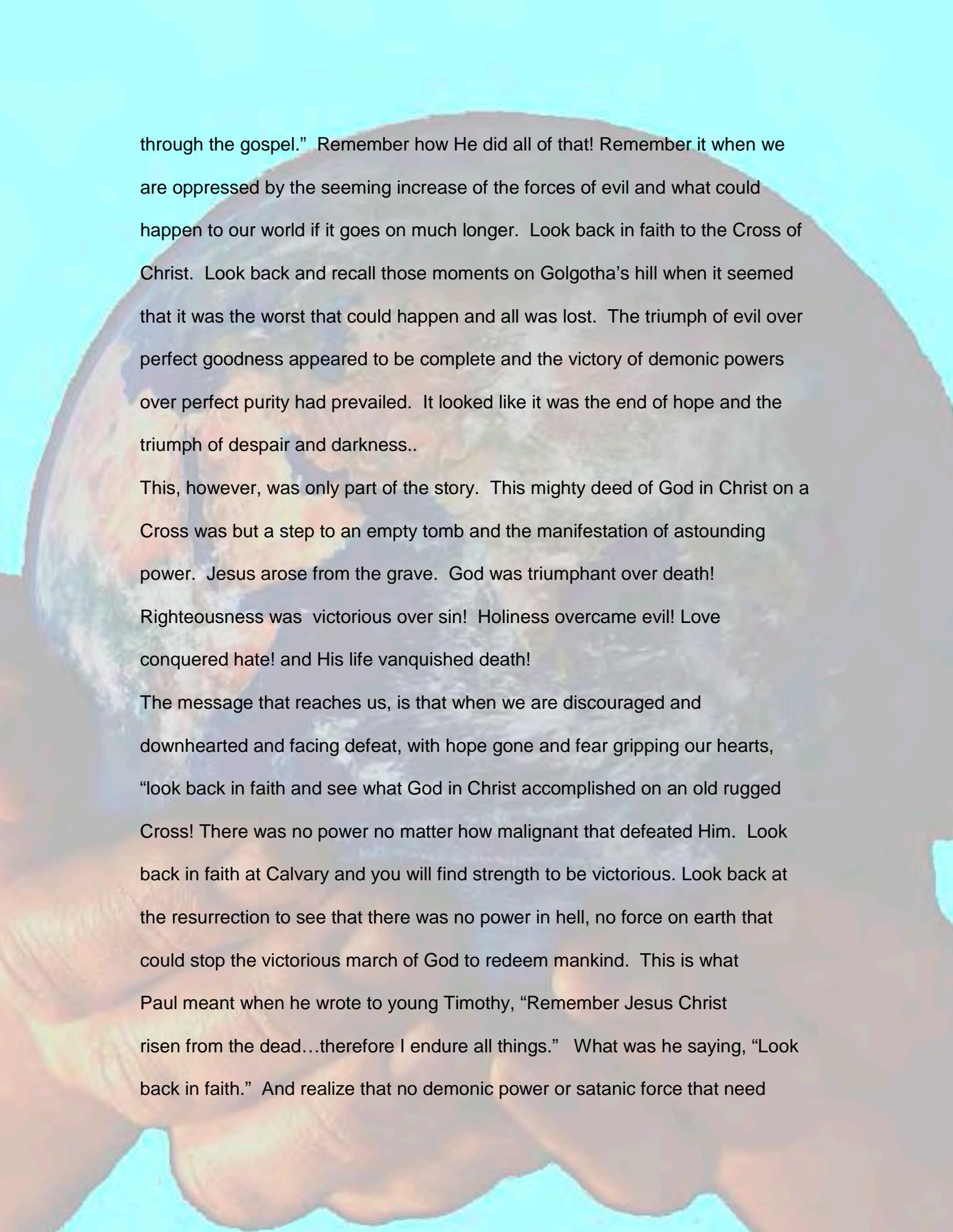
**i. Who He is. Judges 6:10.** "I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites." This eternal unchangeable truth is not only the foundation of his commission to Gideon but, it is the authority by which he issues this commission. But He also reveals,

**ii. What He had done for His people in the past. Judges 6:7-9.** Who He is not only gives birth to this command but also is the motivating force in His move to bring deliverance to His people. Note significantly how He briefly highlights His mighty redemptive deeds when He delivered the Israelites from the clutches of Egypt and brought them to Canaan. And God is saying



to Gideon that because He was able to do this in the past, he would be able to act with power in the present and bring deliverance to the Israelites. The angel of the Lord said to Gideon, Judges 6 v.12. "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." But Gideon is not really convinced. "But sir," He said "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened. Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when He said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian." The real issue was not that God had abandoned them but that they had abandoned God. They had divorced themselves from God by their idolatry. Now Gideon was willing to accept the fact that God had acted redemptively in the past, but it was going to take a strong step of faith to believe that He would act in the same way in the present. In the mind of Gideon it seemed that it was not enough to trace the history of God's saving deeds in the past. Gideon should have looked back in faith at God's mighty redemptive action in the past. The mighty delivering action of God in history should have been the inspiration for faith in the present. That is why the Lord reminded Gideon of it. I have acted with great power in the past, and I can deliver you from the Midianites today with the same power and authority. I am the Lord your God.

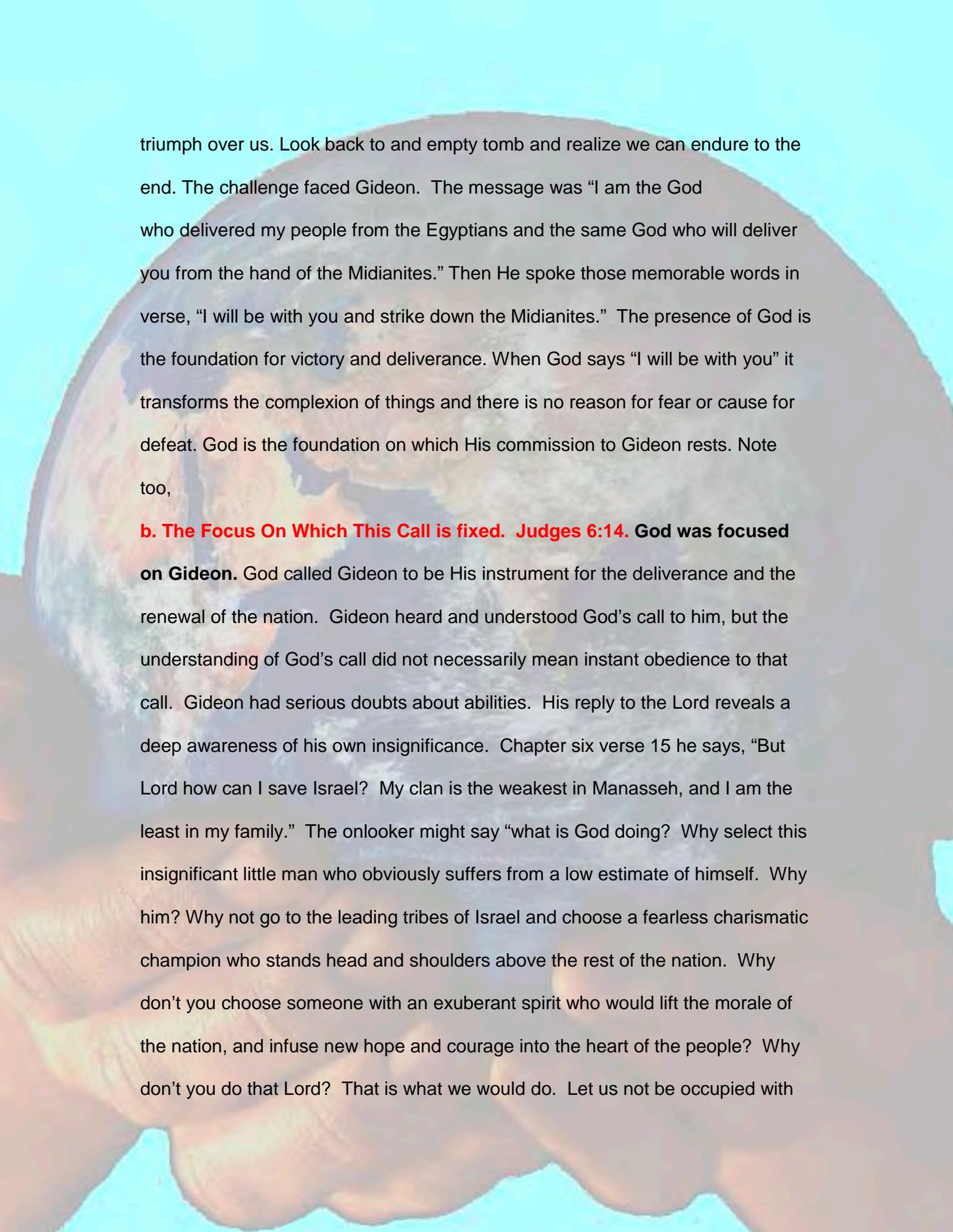
As one has pointed out, the New Testament writers write with one voice said "Look back in faith; remember what happened when God sent His Son to confront and conquer the evil of the world. Remember how He defeated the powers of darkness on a cross, and scattered the demonic world and nullified the authority of death by taking the sting out of it, and brought "immortality to light



through the gospel.” Remember how He did all of that! Remember it when we are oppressed by the seeming increase of the forces of evil and what could happen to our world if it goes on much longer. Look back in faith to the Cross of Christ. Look back and recall those moments on Golgotha’s hill when it seemed that it was the worst that could happen and all was lost. The triumph of evil over perfect goodness appeared to be complete and the victory of demonic powers over perfect purity had prevailed. It looked like it was the end of hope and the triumph of despair and darkness..

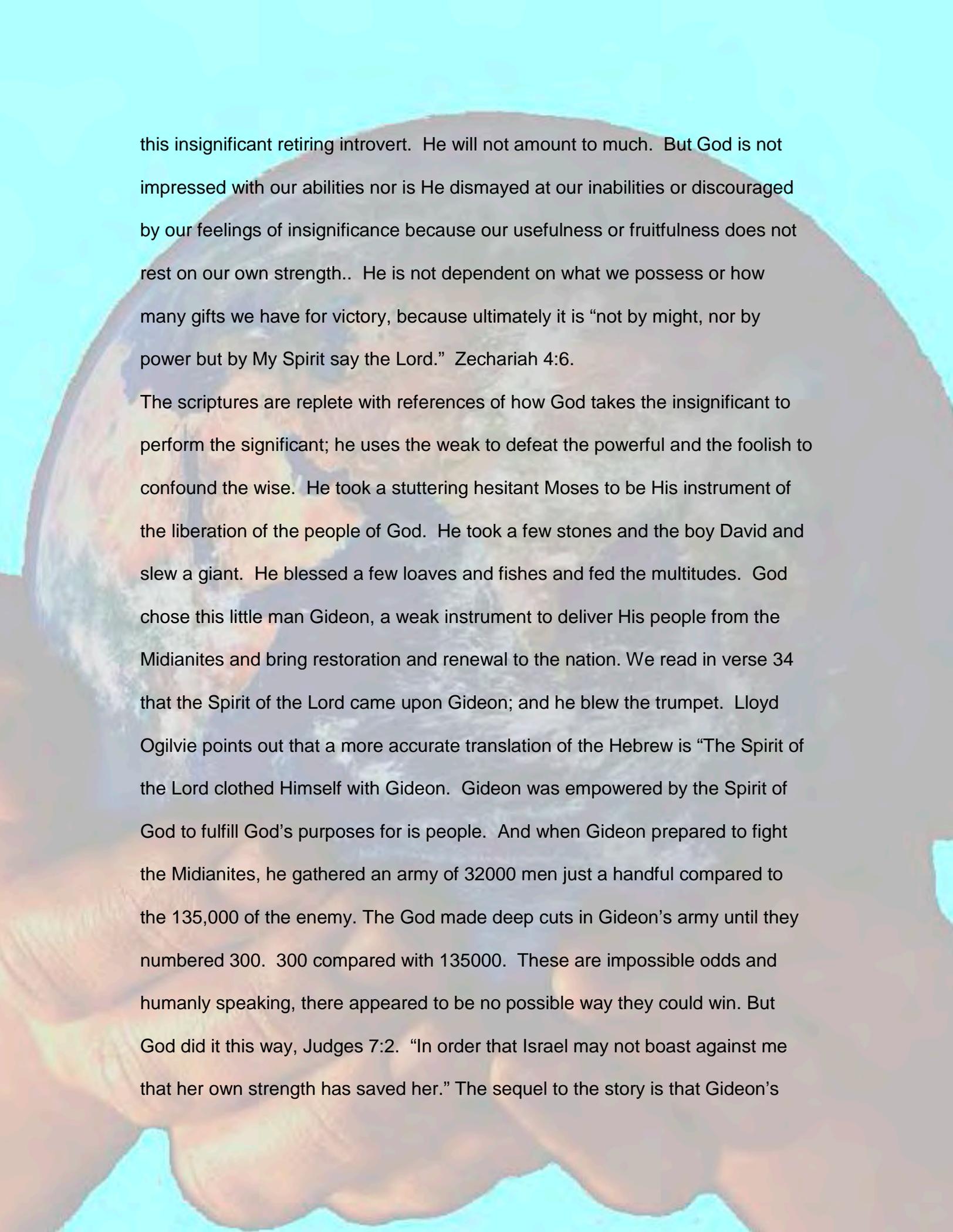
This, however, was only part of the story. This mighty deed of God in Christ on a Cross was but a step to an empty tomb and the manifestation of astounding power. Jesus arose from the grave. God was triumphant over death! Righteousness was victorious over sin! Holiness overcame evil! Love conquered hate! and His life vanquished death!

The message that reaches us, is that when we are discouraged and downhearted and facing defeat, with hope gone and fear gripping our hearts, “look back in faith and see what God in Christ accomplished on an old rugged Cross! There was no power no matter how malignant that defeated Him. Look back in faith at Calvary and you will find strength to be victorious. Look back at the resurrection to see that there was no power in hell, no force on earth that could stop the victorious march of God to redeem mankind. This is what Paul meant when he wrote to young Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead...therefore I endure all things.” What was he saying, “Look back in faith.” And realize that no demonic power or satanic force that need



triumph over us. Look back to an empty tomb and realize we can endure to the end. The challenge faced Gideon. The message was “I am the God who delivered my people from the Egyptians and the same God who will deliver you from the hand of the Midianites.” Then He spoke those memorable words in verse, “I will be with you and strike down the Midianites.” The presence of God is the foundation for victory and deliverance. When God says “I will be with you” it transforms the complexion of things and there is no reason for fear or cause for defeat. God is the foundation on which His commission to Gideon rests. Note too,

**b. The Focus On Which This Call is fixed. Judges 6:14. God was focused on Gideon.** God called Gideon to be His instrument for the deliverance and the renewal of the nation. Gideon heard and understood God’s call to him, but the understanding of God’s call did not necessarily mean instant obedience to that call. Gideon had serious doubts about abilities. His reply to the Lord reveals a deep awareness of his own insignificance. Chapter six verse 15 he says, “But Lord how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” The onlooker might say “what is God doing? Why select this insignificant little man who obviously suffers from a low estimate of himself. Why him? Why not go to the leading tribes of Israel and choose a fearless charismatic champion who stands head and shoulders above the rest of the nation. Why don’t you choose someone with an exuberant spirit who would lift the morale of the nation, and infuse new hope and courage into the heart of the people? Why don’t you do that Lord? That is what we would do. Let us not be occupied with



this insignificant retiring introvert. He will not amount to much. But God is not impressed with our abilities nor is He dismayed at our inabilities or discouraged by our feelings of insignificance because our usefulness or fruitfulness does not rest on our own strength.. He is not dependent on what we possess or how many gifts we have for victory, because ultimately it is “not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit say the Lord.” Zechariah 4:6.

The scriptures are replete with references of how God takes the insignificant to perform the significant; he uses the weak to defeat the powerful and the foolish to confound the wise. He took a stuttering hesitant Moses to be His instrument of the liberation of the people of God. He took a few stones and the boy David and slew a giant. He blessed a few loaves and fishes and fed the multitudes. God chose this little man Gideon, a weak instrument to deliver His people from the Midianites and bring restoration and renewal to the nation. We read in verse 34 that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; and he blew the trumpet. Lloyd Ogilvie points out that a more accurate translation of the Hebrew is “The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon. Gideon was empowered by the Spirit of God to fulfill God’s purposes for his people. And when Gideon prepared to fight the Midianites, he gathered an army of 32000 men just a handful compared to the 135,000 of the enemy. The God made deep cuts in Gideon’s army until they numbered 300. 300 compared with 135000. These are impossible odds and humanly speaking, there appeared to be no possible way they could win. But God did it this way, Judges 7:2. “In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her.” The sequel to the story is that Gideon’s

victory was overwhelming, and God gave it to them. God does not put limitations on what He can do with man's weakness. Paul said that God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of the world the despised things and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that on one may boast before Him." What God primarily wants is your availability. If He does not have our availability He does have us and consequently cannot use us. God uses those who have made themselves available to him. The focus on which God's call was fixed was a weak private man of the smallest of the tribes. But his obedient and willing response made him mighty and brought the renewal and restoration of God's people. Finally we need to underline,

### **3. THE CORRECTION NEEDED BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Judges 6:25-26.**

The Israelites found themselves under the severe repression of the Midianites, and they were forced to live in mountain cliffs and strongholds. The Midianites and the Amalekites had ravaged the land taking the crops and the livestock of the people. This went on for 7 years. The Midianites had so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out for help. It is interesting how crises so often puts life into its proper perspective. They will tend to bring people to their senses making them to see where true values and true security lies. It is also interesting that the people of God did not turn to their idols for help. They cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard their cry, and prepared Gideon to be His instrument of redemption, renewal and revival. God instructed Gideon to tear down the altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it, and build proper kind of altar. The

instructions of were God simple, direct and radical. Tear down and build up!

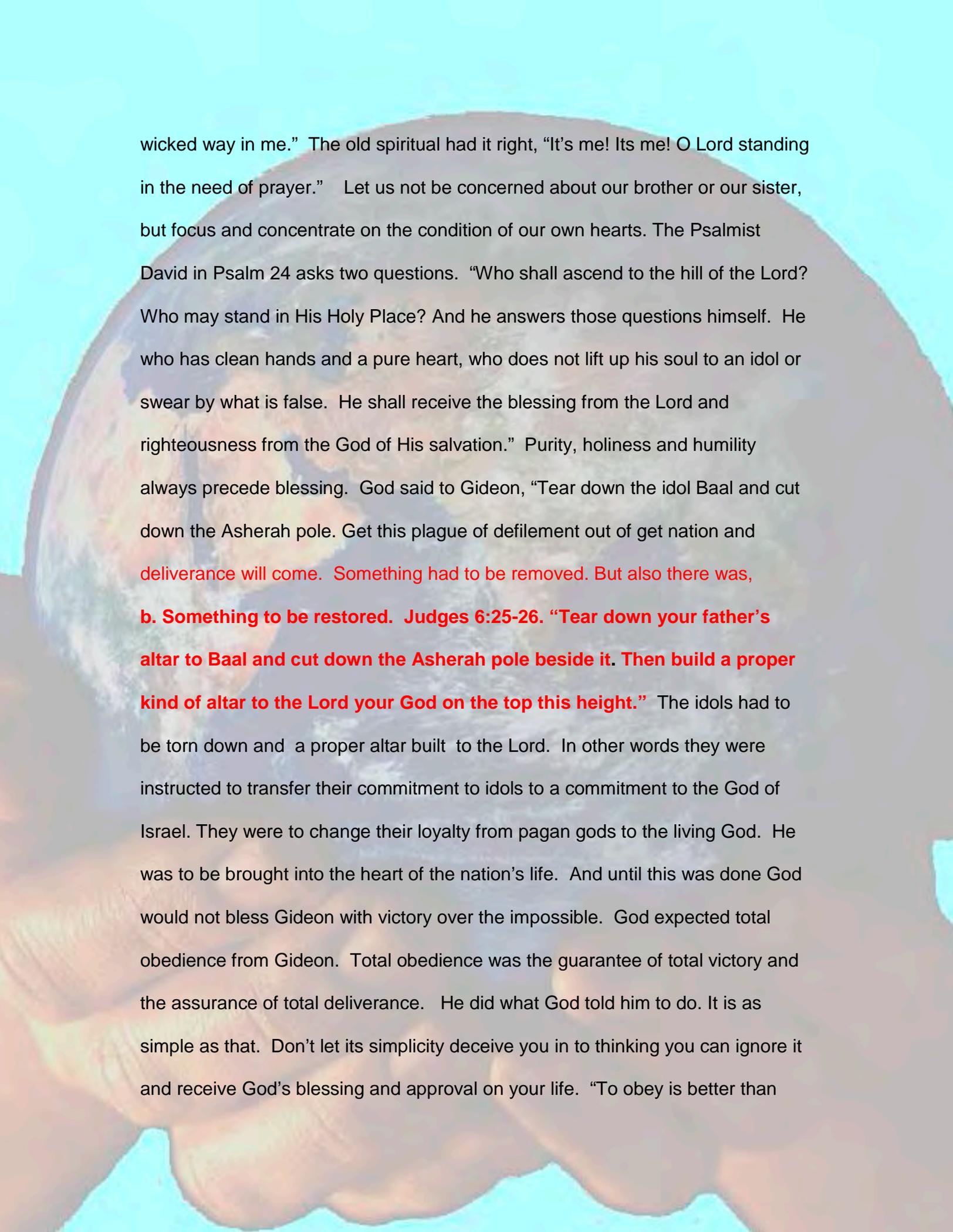
It is clear that before there would be a complete deliverance from the Midianites these two actions had to be taken. They are expressed in two simple thoughts.

First there was,

**a. Something to be Removed. Judges 6:25.** What needed to be removed was the idol Baal together with the Asherah pole. Asherah was the goddess of the Phoenicians and Syrians. Her worship was lewd, defiling, and immoral. She was a counterpart to the god Baal. This pole represented her. Her worship was also associated with that of Baal. It emulated pagan worship in the nation. And what God was saying to Gideon was that before there could be deliverance and renewal in the nation, there must be a radical cleansing in the nation. The false gods must go together with all that was defiling and impure. The defiling obstacles must be swept out of the way. They were to clear out the clutter of the debris of depravity. There had to be a radical cleansing. And it was to start at his father's house.

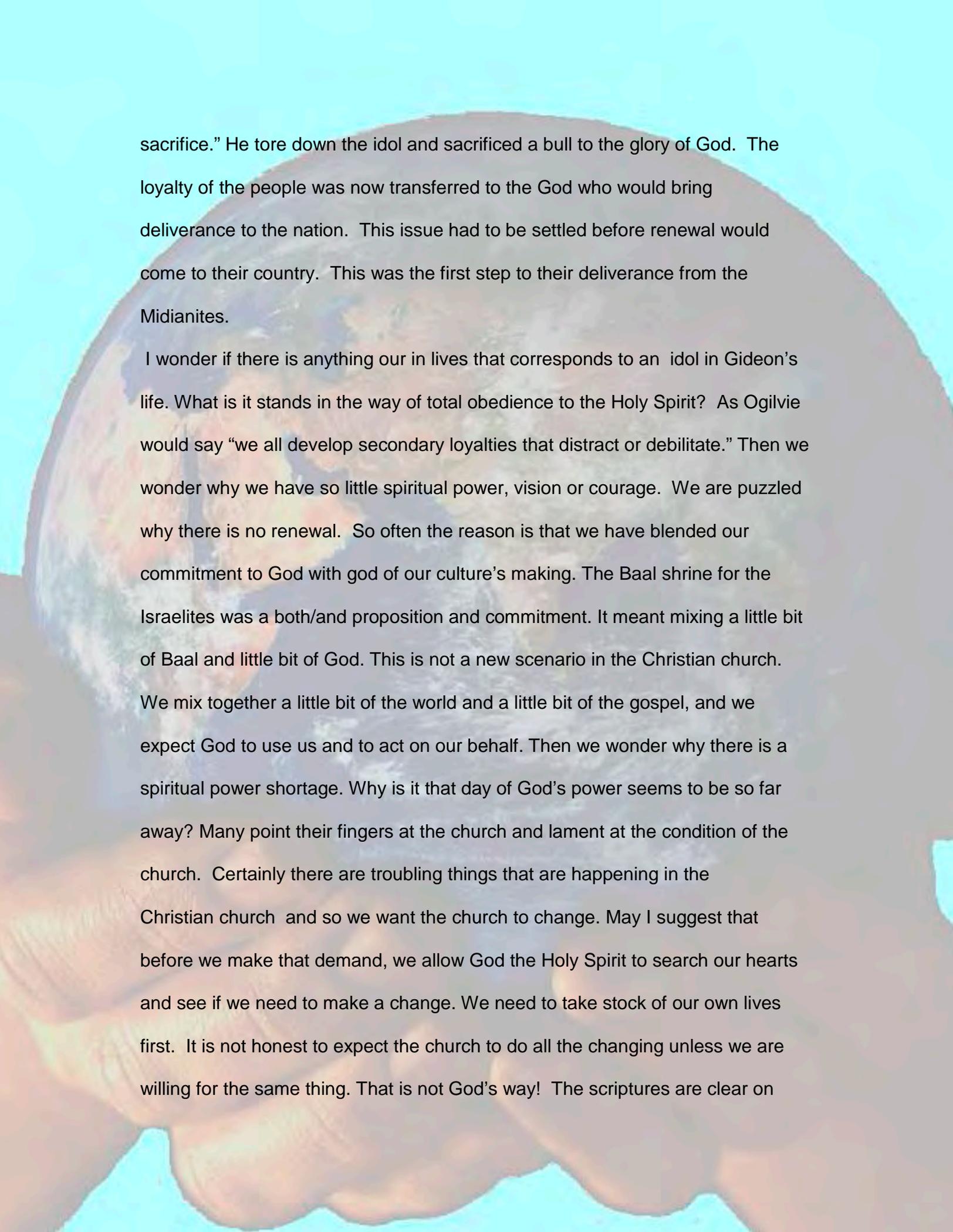
My first concern in the church is that we have a genuine revival, a genuine outpouring of God's Spirit upon us. Not high emotions brought on by syncopated choruses, but spiritual power brought on by the mighty presence of the Spirit of God. We don't need hype we need a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

For this to happen we begin with ourselves by searching our hearts to see if there are any personal idols. Personal idols must go first. There must be an honest open searching of our souls. There has to be judgment day honesty in our spirits. Our prayer should be "Search me O God and see if there be any



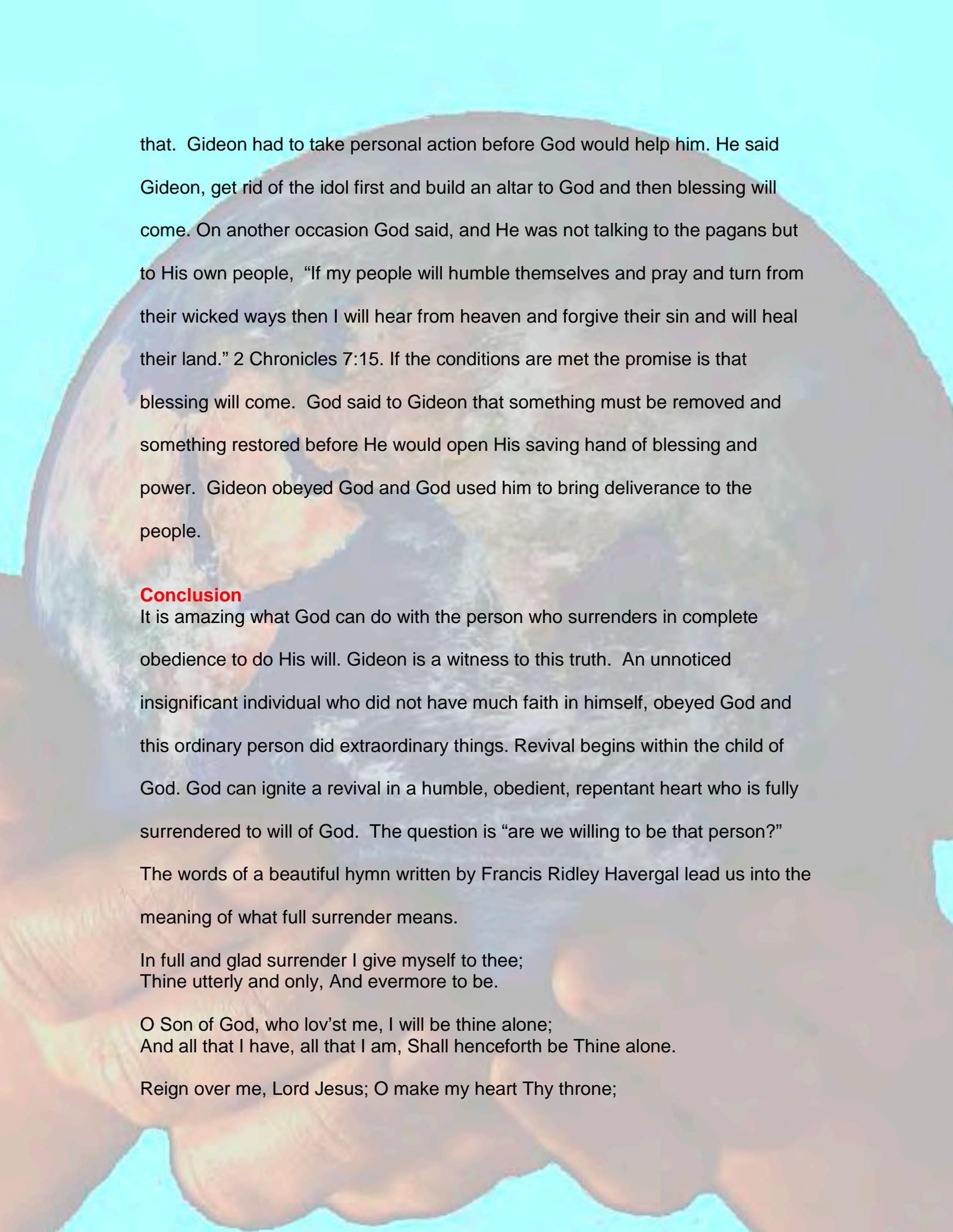
wicked way in me.” The old spiritual had it right, “It’s me! Its me! O Lord standing in the need of prayer.” Let us not be concerned about our brother or our sister, but focus and concentrate on the condition of our own hearts. The Psalmist David in Psalm 24 asks two questions. “Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His Holy Place? And he answers those questions himself. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of His salvation.” Purity, holiness and humility always precede blessing. God said to Gideon, “Tear down the idol Baal and cut down the Asherah pole. Get this plague of defilement out of get nation and **deliverance will come. Something had to be removed. But also there was,**

**b. Something to be restored. Judges 6:25-26. “Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top this height.”** The idols had to be torn down and a proper altar built to the Lord. In other words they were instructed to transfer their commitment to idols to a commitment to the God of Israel. They were to change their loyalty from pagan gods to the living God. He was to be brought into the heart of the nation’s life. And until this was done God would not bless Gideon with victory over the impossible. God expected total obedience from Gideon. Total obedience was the guarantee of total victory and the assurance of total deliverance. He did what God told him to do. It is as simple as that. Don’t let its simplicity deceive you in to thinking you can ignore it and receive God’s blessing and approval on your life. “To obey is better than



sacrifice.” He tore down the idol and sacrificed a bull to the glory of God. The loyalty of the people was now transferred to the God who would bring deliverance to the nation. This issue had to be settled before renewal would come to their country. This was the first step to their deliverance from the Midianites.

I wonder if there is anything our in lives that corresponds to an idol in Gideon’s life. What is it stands in the way of total obedience to the Holy Spirit? As Ogilvie would say “we all develop secondary loyalties that distract or debilitate.” Then we wonder why we have so little spiritual power, vision or courage. We are puzzled why there is no renewal. So often the reason is that we have blended our commitment to God with god of our culture’s making. The Baal shrine for the Israelites was a both/and proposition and commitment. It meant mixing a little bit of Baal and little bit of God. This is not a new scenario in the Christian church. We mix together a little bit of the world and a little bit of the gospel, and we expect God to use us and to act on our behalf. Then we wonder why there is a spiritual power shortage. Why is it that day of God’s power seems to be so far away? Many point their fingers at the church and lament at the condition of the church. Certainly there are troubling things that are happening in the Christian church and so we want the church to change. May I suggest that before we make that demand, we allow God the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and see if we need to make a change. We need to take stock of our own lives first. It is not honest to expect the church to do all the changing unless we are willing for the same thing. That is not God’s way! The scriptures are clear on



that. Gideon had to take personal action before God would help him. He said Gideon, get rid of the idol first and build an altar to God and then blessing will come. On another occasion God said, and He was not talking to the pagans but to His own people, "If my people will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:15. If the conditions are met the promise is that blessing will come. God said to Gideon that something must be removed and something restored before He would open His saving hand of blessing and power. Gideon obeyed God and God used him to bring deliverance to the people.

### **Conclusion**

It is amazing what God can do with the person who surrenders in complete obedience to do His will. Gideon is a witness to this truth. An unnoticed insignificant individual who did not have much faith in himself, obeyed God and this ordinary person did extraordinary things. Revival begins within the child of God. God can ignite a revival in a humble, obedient, repentant heart who is fully surrendered to will of God. The question is "are we willing to be that person?" The words of a beautiful hymn written by Francis Ridley Havergal lead us into the meaning of what full surrender means.

In full and glad surrender I give myself to thee;  
Thine utterly and only, And evermore to be.

O Son of God, who lov'st me, I will be thine alone;  
And all that I have, all that I am, Shall henceforth be Thine alone.

Reign over me, Lord Jesus; O make my heart Thy throne;

A pair of hands, one from the left and one from the right, are shown holding a globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned as if supporting the globe from below. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The overall image has a soft, slightly faded appearance.

It shall be Thine, my Savior, It shall be Thine alone.

O come and reign, Lord Jesus, Rule over everything;  
And keep me always loyal And true to Thee, my King.

May that be the prayer of our hearts. **“Tear down all idols and build an altar** to the Lord and make a full surrender to Him. We will be ready for the perfect will of God. God will then be able to use us to accomplish His will and purposes.

Revival could begin in our surrendered hearts.