

Judges 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Analysis

And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

God's response addresses Gideon's protest not by disputing his inadequacy but by emphasizing divine presence: 'Surely I will be with thee' (ki eh'yeх immakh, כִּי אֵתֶה אַמֵּת). The phrase 'I will be' (eh'yeх, אֵתֶה) echoes God's self-revelation to Moses at the burning bush—'I AM THAT I AM' (eh'yeх asher eh'yeх, אֵתֶה אֲשֶׁר אֵתֶה, Exodus 3:14). This isn't merely promise of companionship but of covenant presence—the eternal, self-existent God personally guaranteeing success. With this presence, Gideon's inadequacy becomes irrelevant.

The promise 'thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man' uses startling imagery. The Hebrew ke'ish echad (כְּאֶחָד, 'as one man') could mean either

1. you'll defeat them as easily as defeating one individual, or
2. they'll fall collectively like a single person.

Either interpretation emphasizes complete, unified defeat. The massive coalition (135,000, 8:10) will collapse as one entity, demonstrating divine intervention—no natural military campaign could achieve such comprehensive victory. This echoes Joshua's victories where God fought for Israel (Joshua 10:14, 42).

Reformed theology emphasizes God's presence as sufficient for any calling. Paul's thorn in the flesh teaches: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made

perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Believers face impossible situations—evangelizing hardened hearts, sanctifying deep-rooted sins, enduring unbearable suffering. Yet God's presence transforms impossibility to certainty. The key isn't minimizing challenges or inflating self-confidence, but trusting God's adequate presence. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' (Romans 8:31) doesn't deny opposition's reality but affirms its ultimate ineffectiveness against divine purpose.

Historical Context

The promise of God's presence echoes covenantal assurances throughout Scripture. The Abrahamic covenant promised: 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward' (Genesis 15:1). The Mosaic covenant assured: 'I will walk among you, and will be your God' (Leviticus 26:12). The Davidic covenant declared: 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son' (2 Samuel 7:14). The New Covenant climaxes: 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them' (Revelation 21:3). Gideon receives this ancient promise in personal form.

The phrase 'as one man' (ke'ish echad) appears elsewhere describing unified action—Israel serving God 'as one man' (Judges 20:1, 8, 11), or enemies falling together. The idiom emphasizes collective unity, whether in purpose (unified action) or fate (collective defeat). Here, the latter meaning fits—the vast Midianite coalition will fall collectively, simultaneously, completely—requiring divine intervention beyond human military capacity.

Ancient warfare typically involved prolonged campaigns—multiple battles, sieges, negotiations, partial victories. Comprehensive defeat of large coalitions rarely occurred quickly. Gideon's victory, accomplished in single night through confusion causing self-destruction (7:22), defied military norms. Similar divine interventions appear throughout Scripture—Egyptians drowning (Exodus 14), Jericho's walls falling (Joshua 6), sun standing still (Joshua 10:12-13), Sennacherib's army destroyed overnight (2 Kings 19:35). These extraordinary deliverances demonstrate God's sovereign power, encouraging faith when facing humanly impossible situations.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise 'I will be with thee' address your specific inadequacies and challenges?
2. What impossible situations in your life require trusting God's presence more than human strategies?
3. How does God's pattern of miraculous deliverance encourage faith when facing overwhelming opposition?

Interlinear Text

עַתָּה נִהְיֵת הִנֵּה אֶלְיוֹן וְאֶתְּמָרָן

said

H413

And the LORD

H3588

H1961

H5973

H559

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וְנִכְפַּתְּתָ

unto him Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite

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אַתָּה

the Midianites

H4080

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man

H376

:תָּמָן

as one

H259

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:12 (Parallel theme): And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

Joshua 1:5 (Parallel theme): There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Acts 11:21 (References Lord): And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Mark 16:20 (References Lord): And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

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