

GOD'S FAITH IN YOU!

Ed Silvos from [Transformation](#) Ch.19

“Saddle Up”

“Saddle up,” said my grandpa while keeping a stern gaze on the eastern pasture. “Saddle up and go get ‘em.” He was staring at a herd of cows that had broken out of their corral during the night and were having the time of their lives eating what they were not supposed to have.

This particular herd was notorious for its propensity for mischief, which is why it was always locked up at night. It was led by a young bull that, if it had been born a human, would have launched a successful revolution in some South American country. It had an extraordinary capacity for leadership, coupled with a keen ability to spot weaknesses in the system that he quickly turned into advantageous opportunities. Whatever it did, the others in the herd followed unquestionably.

Rounding them up was not going to be easy. It never was. During the summers that I usually spent with my grandpa, I had ridden with him on similar occasions and it was always a challenge. But this morning he told me to go and do it by myself!

I could not believe my ears. The “old man” believed that I, a little eight year old me, could do it? Part of me was almost terrorized at the prospect of facing that cunning bull and its gang of “illegals” who broke through the fence. But another part of me felt an exhilarating surge of pride, knowing that my grandpa believed I could do it.

Grandpa was not the touchy feely type.

Grandpa was not the touchy feely type. He was born at the end of the 19th century and was part of a generation that, rather than saying “I love you,” demonstrated their love by working hard to make sure there was food and provisions for everyone. He was also a man of very few words. His facial muscles did not add much to his words. But his eyes did. He never raised his voice, but with his eyes he added the necessary emphasis to what he wanted to say. And that morning there was a glint of “something” in his blue eyes. I sensed it was confidence. He was communicating to me, “You can do it. I believe in you. Now go and prove me right.”

Seeing that glimmer in his eyes was all I needed. It conveyed to me that grandpa believed in me, and that was all it took for me to tackle the task he had assigned to me. Besides, there was no recourse to challenge his command. I had received a direct order.

I sprinted towards the small corral in the back of the house to saddle “Manchado,” my pinto horse, the one grandpa had given me a couple years earlier as a birthday present. When I mounted and pointed Manchado in the direction of the pasture where the bovine rebel leader and his confederates were setting up camp, I felt like a combination of Zorro, Superman and Captain Marvel, my three cartoon heroes. I was fully energized by the faith

grandpa had shown in me. On my own I would have never come up with the confidence to do it, but grandpa's words, framed and accentuated by the glint in his eyes, had energized what little faith I had, and here I was, riding to do what I had never done before.

Surprisingly, everything went well. It was not easy, but after a while I had the entire herd where it was supposed to be. When I rode Manchado back to the house I felt like a victorious Roman general returning from a successful campaign. But I knew better than to expect an accolade from my non-touchy, reserved grandpa. He was a man of very few words, but his eyes...that's what I was going to concentrate on.

By the time I unsaddled Manchado, Grandpa had already hitched another horse to a buggy, the kind of vehicle used for short runs. He did not comment on my triumphant expedition to put down the bull's rebellion, but with an approving glint in his eyes he said, "Let's go to town."

Once in town, a small pueblo, we went to the Cantina where he ordered drinks for both of us. That was not unusual. He had done it before. He normally had a glass of wine, or he and I would each get a glass of grenadine. But what was different this time is what he said and how he said it. In a louder than usual voice, intended for others to hear him, he intoned, "Bring the usual, for me and my partner."

He called me partner in front of his friends! That morning, his show of faith in me electrified the faith I had in me and empowered me to perform a task that until then I had viewed as impossible. What triggered this breakthrough was his faith in me. And now he had just announced that we were partners! Awesome!

Gideon — "*Mighty Warrior*"

When it comes to faith in God, we are often buffeted by similar feelings of inadequacy because we mistakenly root our faith in our capacity to believe. We measure faith by how much faith in God we have. And we often end up discouraged because we fail to factor in how much faith God has in us. We seldom think of that possibility. However, the truth is that God uses His faith in us to prime the pump for our faith in Him to grow. All through the Bible, in book after book, He eloquently states how precious, holy, and victorious we are. These statements come to the rescue when we find ourselves stuck in feelings of unworthiness, sinfulness and defeat. Reading how assuredly He expects us to win provides us with the second wind necessary to pursue it and attain it.

This issue is eloquently illustrated by the story of Gideon, in the book of Judges, chapters 6 through 8. Usually when we think of this Old Testament hero we picture a brave, fearless man who knew nothing but an unending string of victories. However, Gideon lived at a time of tragic national devastation. Year after year, when harvest time arrived and God's people were ready to enjoy its fruit, their enemies the Midianites descended on the land like locusts, overrunning the crops, and raping the land. They drove God's people to hide in caves in nearby hills from where they helplessly watched the fruit of their labors being plundered.

On one such occasion Gideon was hiding wheat inside of a wine press before taking off to hole up in a cave. Gideon was not planning to fight, not even to passively resist the invaders. It was not a very uplifting picture.

It is at this juncture that an angel visits him and declares: “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judges 6:12). This was a strange salutation since it did not match the facts at hand. Gideon was certainly not a warrior, he was a fleeing civilian seeking refuge. And by no stretch of the imagination could he be considered mighty. On the contrary, he was crushed inside and devoid of hope. How then can this declaration, so at odds with reality, be true? The reason why Gideon could be truthfully called a mighty warrior is because God has a better opinion of us than the opinion we have of ourselves.

God’s opinion of us is determined by victories still in the future

God’s opinion of us is, like my grandpa’s was, determined by victories still in the future, whereas our assessment of our own capabilities (or lack thereof) is shaped by past failures and by what we have not done. God saw Gideon as the general he was going to be.

Like the Israel of those days, many Christians today often become prisoners in caves of resignation and fear. Like Gideon, they have fallen into a cycle of failure, riding a merry-go-round of defeats until hope has vanished and faith has been discarded as an option.

If this is your case, you need to make a decision: Whose report will you believe, God’s or the enemy’s? God has tremendous faith in us because He sees what we are capable of, and to that effect He is willing and eager to invest in us. Remember, the enemy of faith is not unbelief, it is memory, because negative memories bind us to the past, whereas faith reveals all the positive things that are yet to happen (*Hebrews 11:1*).

Gideon obviously was not convinced that God was with him nor that he was a mighty warrior, because he began to argue with the angel that if God was indeed with him, then why hadn’t he seen miracles like the ones his forefathers talked of so much.

WHY? The Ultimate Question

Bq. *Why?* Is the question Satan likes to resort to when we are immersed in a deep personal crisis.

The more we fixate on this question, the more prone we become to doubt the power of God and the reality of miracles, which are precisely what we need to get out of our predicament. So it was that with Gideon (see Judges 6:13).

It is very revealing that at this point God Himself replaced the angel in the scenario. I can imagine God saying, “This is a tough case that requires My personal attention.” Then, ignoring the “why” question that will lead to nowhere, God proceeds to give a direct command—illogical, improbable and without explanation: “In this your strength, go and save the nation (Israel)” (Judges 6:14). I say improbable, Gideon had hardly any strength left, and whatever strength he had was not adequate to save himself, much less the nation.

But there is a powerful principle at work here. In essence, God is telling Gideon, Stop thinking about personal survival and trust Me for something that will save you and everything around you.

If we remain fixated on mere survival, struggling to come up with well meaning (albeit temporary), short-serving solutions, then we will never reach our destiny. We need to believe the report of the Lord instead of a report that is the sum of our fears and doubts.

A Personal Illustration

In 1980, following a week of medical tests, I sat down with my doctor to hear him state that I had a maximum of two years to live. A neurological disease had taken up residence in my body and medical science did not have a cure for it.

I vividly recall how he walked up to a blackboard (this was 1980 and we were meeting in a teaching hospital) and drew first an “x” to indicate where I was, health wise, that day, and then drew a line that at first was level but after a short while took an abrupt turn downward. At that point he said, “Sooner or later, this will happen to you.” His descending thrust caused the chalk to hit the chalk-holder tray and it broke in two pieces. One fell to the floor and began rolling in my direction, and the shocking, sobering reality of the moment gripped my mind. I thought, “This chalk represents my life today. I am still rolling but it will soon come to a stop.”

My doctor’s prognosis was confirmed by other specialists and by the body of literature I read on my illness. All this information got stored in my mind and became a bulwark in my memory. Every visit to the doctor was a reminder of what I had been told. “Two years and counting.” Two years is a frighteningly short time when you are 35 years old with a wife and four children ranging in age from two to eleven.

All I heard were “medical facts” that preempted any miraculous intervention. That was the case until I discovered the power of intercession. I made a decision to set aside three days to seek God and inquire not into the past, but into the future. My question to God was direct and simple, “Is this an illness unto death or unto life?”

For nearly three solid days I interceded, beseeching God and seeking His face. After two days, 23 hours and 45 minutes had gone by with nothing but divine silence. and only fifteen more minutes to go! I said to God, “I have enjoyed your presence and I am grateful for the privilege of being able to bring up this matter. I submit to your will. If your silence is the answer, as much as I dislike it, I accept it. But with all due respect, allow me to say that it would have been very nice for me to hear from you, even if it was to confirm what the doctors have already told me.”

I was heading toward our retreat center in San Nicolas, Argentina. With just minutes before the self-imposed deadline and less than a mile to go before I would have to resign myself to what my memory had been saying all along, all of a sudden the presence of God invaded the car. It was so powerful that He became tangible. I could feel and sense Him all around me. The car became a chariot of fire, and as if riding on the wings of angels, I made it to

the retreat center and for the rest of the night I was praying with Him with groans too deep for words, as Romans 8:26 teaches.

When dawn came, I had received, by faith, a promise that God was going to heal me. I had nothing in the natural to pin it on but just plain, raw faith. I had come to a “Y” in the road. If I looked at the past, I would die. If I dwelt on my present condition, I would wither. But if I gazed into the future, penetrating the ever-present memory-fed fog of doubts with my newfound faith, I knew that I would live. *And I chose life!*

For the next six months I went through medical hell. My days were measured from injection to medication to time for another injection. But every day I would choose to look into the future—often from a deep rut in the road—to salute from a distance the promise that I would live and not die. It was a gargantuan battle between memory and faith. And faith won. The two years that were to have ended in death have become twenty-seven years to date filled with the most exhilarating life, fully focused on bringing transformation to cities and nations.

Heading for Victory

Your true destiny awaits you at the end of a path guarded by menacing giants, and fear is one of them. You must press on knowing that God has a very positive opinion of you and He is commanding you to shift from survival mode to conquering mode. Firmly take hold of your Father’s hand in fullness of faith! Let Him lift you up and lead you to where He has destined you to go. He is there to enable you. He believes in you as He believed in fear ridden Gideon when He told him to save the nation.

Next, God instructed Gideon to go to his father’s house to tear down the altar of Baal and the image of Ashera adjacent to it, and to use the stones from the former and the wood from the latter to build an altar to the Lord upon which to sacrifice Gideon’s dad’s prized bulls.

Gideon was again struggling with fear because he was the youngest in his father’s household and his own family was not a prominent one in Israel. His dad would be more than angry when he discovered that two of his prize bulls had been sacrificed. Not yet bold enough to do it in the daytime, Judges 6:27 tells that he carried out the assignment under cover of darkness when no one was watching. But he did it.

The next morning when the elders found the altars missing, they wasted no time in finding out that it was the work of Gideon, and reported it to his father. All of Gideon’s fears were about to become realities.

But against all odds, Gideon’s father took sides with him and told the elders, mockingly, that if Baal had an issue about what his son had done, then Baal should defend himself. In fact, his dad became so pleased with Gideon’s actions that he changed his name to Jerubbaal, which means, “The one that Baal has to contend with.” In other words, he was saying, “My son can knock Baal down. Now Baal, if he is who he says he is, needs to get up and defend himself against the God my son is serving” (see Judges 6:28-32).

Why such a dramatic turn in Gideon's life? We find the answer in the second principle: not only does God have a better opinion of you than you have of yourself, but when you agree to shift from survival mode to overcoming mode, He will cause your family and elders to develop a better opinion of you than you think is possible.

Today, too many believers are pinned down in their faith by what others think of them or what they think others might think or do. Memory of past failures has erected altars of impotence on the hills surrounding the valley of helplessness, where they struggle in spiritual indenture. And what makes those shrines so formidable is that their elders have built them, which means that to tear them down we will have to do what they have not been able to do; in essence, to fear God more than men.

Tear Down the Strongholds

Chuck Ripka, the banker who is one of the key players in the transformation of Elk River, Minnesota, grew up in a dysfunctional home devastated by the alcohol that both of his parents consumed, and the misery that it brought upon the children. Fights between his Dad and Mom had to be broken up by Chuck and his brothers. Insults and abuse were common all around. He did not study past high school. He did not have a trade or a career.

As a young man, when he looked around, everything was dotted with monuments to family failures, some small, some big. But Chuck and Kathi met Jesus and decided to set their gaze beyond those hills and received the strength to tear those altars down.

Today, Chuck and Kathi have a loving marriage, precious children, and a home that is a haven of peace to friends and strangers. In addition, Chuck has become the founder and president of an international bank that invests 51% of its profits to transform nations. His testimony and his actions have touched and impacted Presidents, Generals, CEOs, and myriads of common folks. But none of that would have happened had Chuck and Kathi not dared to tear down ancestral curses.

If you are struggling with shrines of ancestral failure... Believe God, not the past!

If you are struggling with similar shrines of ancestral failure, it is time that you choose to obey God. Reject the notion that it cannot happen because it has never happened before. Believe God, not the past!

Imagine the impression that a timid Gideon must have made on his father with this sudden but calculated demonstration of godly courage that dismantled every false spiritual anchor the family had,. You must obey the word of the Lord and walk through that challenging threshold that is always framed by fear on one side and faith on the other. You will be surprised by the unexpected results once you tear down those altars because it is impossible to develop faith while living in the shadow of failure.

When Francis Oda was asked suddenly and unexpectedly by the President of Tahiti to find a solution to a problem that had baffled 13 top French engineers for the previous six months, Francis knew that he needed to look beyond those shadows—and quickly, since in a few hours before he was expected at the President's residence for dinner. He accepted the assignment and looked to God. That was the turning point. God loves that

childlike faith and He delights Himself in bestowing extraordinary answers to those who dare to pray extraordinary prayers. Francis' wise choice resulted in the salvation of the President and key members of his family and inner circle.

Once Gideon's self image and the opinion of his family and peers had been reshaped to reflect God's perspective, God instructed him to go to the enemy's camp. As expected, this worrier-now-makeshift-warrior stuttered to a halt, and to counter it, God made another incomprehensible and almost comical proposal to Gideon in Judges 7:10: if Gideon was afraid to go down by himself, he could take his servant Purah with him! What difference would it make for Gideon to go by himself or with one other person?

All we know is that Gideon decided to exercise the option offered by God and took Purah with him. Upon arriving in the camp in the dead of night, Gideon became privy to a conversation going on inside one of the tents. A Midianite soldier was relating a strange dream in which he saw a loaf of bread blown into the camp and striking the main tent, causing it to collapse. His tent mate immediately provided an interpretation that I am sure surprised Gideon more than anyone else: "This is no other than Gideon, into whose hands God has delivered us" (Judges 7:13-14). And that is exactly what happened shortly afterwards.

That reveals the third principle: not only does God have a better opinion of you than you have of yourself, and not only will He cause your elders, family and friends to think better of you than you think is possible, but God will make your enemies develop a better opinion of you! But for this to happen you need to go to the enemy's camp. That is where that type of divine revelation is bestowed. The farther you get from the wine cellar, the bolder God's interaction with you will be; and the greater your interaction with Him, the stronger your faith will become.

God has already decreed victory for those who agree to carry out His assignments, even if like Gideon they shake in their boots. As long as they obey and move forward, God will deliver the promised victory because He has already told your enemies that you will overcome them. Jesus stated unequivocally that the Gates of Hades would not prevail against us. This is a given. But for us to see it happen we must leave the pseudo protection of the wine cellar and fight for our destiny, for the transformation of our nation.

Memory Vs. Faith

The crowning point that we must not miss in Gideon's story is this: the enemy of faith is not unbelief, it is memory; because memory is the record of what has already taken place, whereas faith is the revelation of what is yet to happen. Even good memories can be bad if they keep us from believing God for something better by enticing us to settle for the good we know instead of for the best we have not tasted yet.

How can we get out of those canyons of despair? It is very simple: hear God say to you, "Saddle up and go get 'em!" Believe that He has a better opinion of you than the one you have of yourself, because *He knows what you are capable of and He knows the victories that are in store for you!*

Let His faith in you energize what little faith you have in Him

Let His faith in you energize what little faith you have in Him and you will pivot from the wine cellar towards your destiny. God sees the nations in the grip of the evil one, doing what they are not supposed to do and being led by an evil crafty “bull,” and He says to you, ***“Go get ‘em!”***

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