

Hebrews 11:33-34

by Don McClure

The sermon explores Gideon's journey from doubt to obedience as he confronts Israel's idolatry and seeks God's blessing.

Duration: 49:02

Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6, Judges 6:33-35, Judges 7:2, Judges 7:7, Judges 7:22

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Gideon from the Bible. He emphasizes the battle that God has in our lives of bringing us to a place of obedience and building an altar for Him. The preacher highlights how God wanted Gideon to trust Him and have faith, even though the numbers were against them. Despite Gideon's initial fear and doubt, God showed His power and delivered the Midianites into their hands. The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's strength and not being overwhelmed by the size of the enemy we face.

Transcript

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them under the hand of the Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and the caves, and the strongholds.

And so it was when Israel sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them. And they encamped against them, and they destroyed the increase of the earth till thou come to Gaza, and left no other sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, or oxen, or ass. For they came up with their cattle in their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude.

For both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage.

And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you. And I draved them out from before you, and I gave you their land. And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God,

fear not.

The God, fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice. And there came an angel of the Lord, and he sat under an oak, which was by Oprah Winfrey's house, that pertained unto Joash. I always just like to see if people are listening at all, but to Abizite.

And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine press, and hid it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and he said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all of his miracles, which our fathers told us of saying that did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us, and delivered us unto the hand of the Midianites.

And the Lord looked upon him, and he said, Go in this thy might, that thou mightest save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least of my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

Father, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for your desire to take it, and to strengthen our faith. And Lord, as we look at the children of Israel, and times their lives greatly impoverished, and they've absolutely lost so much, looking so much for some hope, some peace, some joy, some stability, going through these cycles of life, learning to depend upon you afresh, each generation. Lord, we pray that you would teach us from Gideon, as we look at this story this morning, that our faith may grow, and we may understand our own processes of faith, and how we can see you work within it.

Father, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, as you are probably aware, of course, the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, as here Gideon mentioned to the Lord. He says, we heard all these wonderful miracles when we were brought out of Egypt, and these great things that you did, but we don't see them anymore. And now we're greatly impoverished.

We're going through terrible trials. And God, where are you? And you tell us you want to do wonderful things. I don't see it.

And here is, he's kind of complaining, you know, to the Lord about this. When the Lord came, and he said, I'm going to use you to deliver the children of Israel out of this time of judgment that they're in yet again themselves. And of course, the children of Israel, after Moses did bring them out of Egypt, Joshua then finally brought them into the land as one group, as one nation.

But then at the end of Joshua's life in ministry, he instructed the children of Israel, the 12 tribes, that they were now to essentially divide and conquer the rest of the land. They were in, they'd taken some great battles, had some wonderful strongholds. But then he said, okay, now you're all going to disperse throughout the land and each one of your tribes.

Here's the land that is being given unto you, and we need to have you take it and go destroy the enemies that are in it. Well, so they attempted to go out and do that. And the book of Judges is a 450 year period of the struggles that they continued to have.

And in their own ability, you might say, to divide and conquer. For what happened so many times to the children of Israel is that when they actually got in, and here was these enemies that were so terrible and oppressed them so much and so wicked and so corrupt. But when they actually got into the land, and then they began to look around and they saw their gods, their goddesses, they saw their images, their idols, and saw a lot of the things that they were all about.

They were very enticing. They were very attractive. They were very desirable.

They're very sensual, of course, too. The gods and goddesses of the Canaanites were that they worshiped. And here, essentially, it was just all pornography in many ways.

But here, as they went in, instead of just destroying all of these things, he kind of said, well, hey, I mean, yeah, they're really bad people and they do bad things. But, boy, these are some interesting and seemingly rather desirable things. And then instead of destroying all of these things, they found themselves actually being drawn into them.

And then when they would be drawn into them, the next thing you know is God would step back from them and essentially lead them to the enemies to come back and oppress them. All right, if you want them, you don't want to destroy their gods and their goddesses and their images, we'll let them come back and overrun you. If you don't want to turn to your god and you want to let their gods remain, you're going to have trouble.

And so they did. And they went through cycle after cycle for 450 years where generation after generation dealt with these sorts of battles. Well, when we get here to the life of in the ministry of Gideon, some 47 years earlier, Deborah, the prophetess, provided some great inspiration to Barak and the leadership to bring Israel to end, you know, wonderfully such an oppression that they'd had before, some 47 years earlier.

But here only after 47 years, they're completely oppressed once again terribly. They've backslidden and done full circle again in such a short period of time. And now for some seven years, the Midianites, year after year, would come into their land and would just leave them terribly impoverished.

They'd let them sow their fields, grow their harvest, and, you know, try to get their flocks back up and going and their oxen and their donkeys and their cattle and their sheep and things. And as they would begin to multiply and grow, then the Midianites would just sit over there on the edge and the Amalekites, here's their bringing in their harvest, beginning to harvest their crop. And then they just rip them off, come in and take everything, you know, just like a bunch of pirates.

And every year they'd go through these cycles and it was just terrible. And this was perhaps this particular time when Gideon came along, of all of the cycles of struggle that they had through the book of Judges, this was probably the worst of all of the oppressions that they went through. They're very overwhelmed.

They're literally hiding in caves and in dens that they just dug into mountainsides, you know, try to hide and protect themselves from the Midianites when they would come. The people had basically, they'd lost everything. They were so terribly impoverished and their lives were a mess.

And then they finally realized perhaps that this was actually allowed by God's hand. It was something there that as the Lord had allowed this to occur, it was just to want to get them to a place to where they turned and they'd cry out to the Lord as they did here once again. Finally, they began to cry out for God.

They missed Him. They missed His power and His life and His joy and His hope and His stability and all the things that God so wonderfully loves to bring to life. And so there as they began to cry out, the Lord raised up a judge, Gideon in this case.

And there as it actually happens, it tells us an angel of the Lord comes, sits under a tree, waits for Gideon. As he watched Gideon there, as he's bringing in the harvest, trying to hide from the Midianites, not having anybody see what he's doing there so he can get what bread he can to care for his family before the Midianites figure out what's going on. And he's, they're grinding it out there by the wine press.

All of a sudden he hears a voice. And here's this angel says it, said unto him, he said, The Lord be with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And what an interesting sort of a thing there.

I imagine it's clear that Gideon certainly didn't think that. And I'm sure nobody thought that at all. The Lord's with you, you mighty man of valor.

And in fact, Gideon's response, it says in verse 13, he says, Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then is all this befallen us? Where is all of his miracles, which our fathers told us of saying, did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt? And, but, and then in verse 15, he said unto him, he says, Oh my Lord, wherewithal shall I save Israel? Behold, he said, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least of my father's house. He looks there, and here he's so intrigued, thou mighty man of valor, the Lord is with thee. I mean, he's stunned.

I imagine he was shaking in his boots. He was probably thinking he was alone, hiding, you know, bringing in the crop and the harvest. And all of a sudden, here's a voice, you know, thou mighty man of valor, the Lord's with thee.

And he probably, I don't think so. I'm a chicken. I'm a coward.

I'm hiding. What do you, what do you think you're saying? I'm sure it didn't register at all. And then when he spoke again to him, then no, I do want to use you.

I want to use your life to set you free and bring blessing back into your home and those around you in the nation. And Gideon is so stunned by it. He just looked as if to say to the angel, I don't know what wine press you were sent to, but you went to the wrong one, fella.

I mean, he comes back and he says, there's no way this could be. He says, I'm the least of my father's house. And my father's house is the least of the tribes.

And then, and then Manasseh was the least of the tribes of Israel. In Israel, there was this whole pecking order of the tribes and the powerful tribe, the, the, the tribes that were the military tribes and the strong tribes. And this there, they were the least of them, Manasseh was.

And then here, his father's house was the least of the tribe. And he's the least of his father's house. Is it to say I'm the most unlikely candidate ever that you would come and just say, I want to bless you.

And I want to use your life. And he is absolutely stunned that such a thing could be. And yet the wonderful thing is, is that when we realize the keys to blessing that every one of us has, there's not a one of us that doesn't want a rich life, rich in, in God's peace and his joy and his blessing and his care for us.

A life and a heart in our relationships that are just overflowing essentially with a harvest of those things. It's just wonderful. We all want it.

Who of course doesn't? We're made for it. But here is, is Gideon is being set aside. He's such a wonderful picture for us and how you get it.

Because one of the first things is you find that the people that God does is and pours out his greatest blessings upon. First of all, there's always a humility about it. There's always a realization.

I don't deserve this. I don't know why there's so many other people that ought to have God's blessing, that ought to have the fullness of his life, that are much more deserving than I. And here it's always, you know, through the scripture, you know, God always to use the things that are not, the Bible says, to bring to not the things that are. His strength, the Bible says, is made perfect in human weakness.

And, and here he just comes to this man who's honestly struck. Do you, do you really want to bless my life? Do you really want to use me? I can't believe this. And he's even explains to the angel why I can't see why that you would want to do such a thing.

But God did. And here, the first thing that God wants, if you would love, you know, in a sense to have a life like this, so blessed and so rich in the things of the kingdom of God, it starts first of all with a humility. And then that humility though, God wants it to be enough of a humility that it'll also produce an obedience.

So many times, I mean, God wants to come to say, I've got a blessing for you. I've got wonderful things for your life that you can't even imagine them, but you've got to trust me. You've got to obey me.

I'm going to tell you to do something. And so often we may say, I'll tell you, if God would ever speak to me and he'd tell me to do something and he wants to bless me, I'd do it. Would we? Well, here, the interesting thing, look at what the Lord told Gideon that he wanted him to do.

It, verse 22, it says, and when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, alas, O Lord, because I've seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said to him, peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there under the Lord and he called it Jehovah Shalom, which to this day is yet in Oprah, the Abizrites.

And it came to pass that night, here he built an altar for the Lord. So often if we really want God's blessing, the first thing he built an altar, but then the Lord, it comes to him and in verse 25, it came to pass that night that the Lord said unto him, thy father's young bullocks, even the second bullock of seven years, throw down the altar and take this bullock. And then I want you to throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath built and cut down the grove that is by it and build up an altar under the Lord, thy God, upon the top of this mountain in the ordered place and take the second bullock and offer a burnt sacrifice with wood of the grove, which thou shall cut down.

Here is something where now essentially the Lord told Gideon, I want you to go and you're in your father's house. Your father's built this altar to Baal. And then he's got these groves and the groves were, as you may know, these very sensual, the Canaanite gods and goddesses, many breasted, they're just the, their form of pornography in the age.

It was something very sensual, men and women and all sorts of, of, uh, sensual, uh, positions and things going on. And it was very sexual by design. And here was something the children of Israel, they got into

the land and they saw all this stuff.

It says, wow, I've never seen stuff. Listen to something. This is interesting.

It was exciting. And they actually took them in here. They were to drive, they were to destroy all these things, but now they actually had them in their own homes.

They actually had them around their own lives. And here the Lord told him, I want to bless you, Gideon. And I want to bless you amazingly wonderfully, but now I want you to go home and I want you to tear this stuff down.

I want you to get rid of it. I want it out of the house. And then I want you to build an altar to me.

Well, Gideon, the interesting thing he says in verse 27, then Gideon took men after his servants and he did as the Lord said unto him. And so it was because he feared his father's household that the men and the men of the city that he could not do it by day, but he did it by night. Here was something where he said, okay, Lord, I'll do it.

But then he thought about it and he says, I'm afraid to do it by day. I'm afraid to do it in wide open, you know, when I'm seen and some will happen, he's fearful of the thing, but he, so he does it by night. And, but I personally, I suppose I understand that a little in a sense, this isn't quite as bold as Jesus going into the temple and just turning over the money changers and throwing them out face to face.

Gideon goes in at nighttime and he tears all this stuff out. And, but if you could imagine if the Lord came to you and you're a young man and he says, I want you to go home to your father's house. And I want you to tear out all the pornography, all the literature.

I want you to get rid of the adult, you know, cable TV stuff. I want you to get rid of all the liquor cabinet. And I want you to get dumped all this stuff and go do it.

Well, here Gideon, now, all of a sudden, I mean, he wants God's blessing. He really wants it. God, I want your power.

I want your fullness. I want everything that, that you can give me. I really do.

And I even goes, he built an altar and he worships God and he's excited. There's a thought that this is God really is looking at him, say, you're right in the threshold of blessing. But now he says, now you want me to go do this.

You want me to go clean out my house? And he says, that's not going to go well. But the amazing thing is he did it. He was willing to do it.

He did it. He was chicken. He was a coward.

He did it by night, but he did it. And when somebody there looks at their life and they realize that there is something going on in their life that shouldn't be, it's interesting. Even Gideon's father, when they realized what had happened, Gideon was afraid of it.

But look at his father's response in verse 28. It says, when the men of the city rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down and the grove was cut down that was by it. And the second bullock

was offered upon the altar that was built.

And they said to one another, who has done this thing? And who tore out our cable? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash has done this thing. Then the men of the city, they said unto Joash, bring out thy son, that he may die, because he has cast down the altar of Baal and because he has cast down the grove that was by it. And Joash said unto all that stood against him, will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death, whilst yet mourning, if he is a God.

Here, you know, Gideon's father, who had allowed these things in his life and in his home, it was there. But, you know, he fully agreed when finally it was dealt with, he realized, you know, this, why have we done this? How did this happen to us? And he always had a conscience. He always knew it wasn't right.

It is always an awareness of it, but he just allowed it to happen. I wonder how many things that we look at that can be in our homes, in our lives that we know aren't right. We know full on if the Lord came in, you know, and here, sit down, look at through our literature here, look through our TV programs, look through our DVDs and videos and see that they look at the things that entertain us.

Look at the altars that we can so easily build up. I wonder how many of us, the moment he'd walk in, we'd find ourselves saying, Lord, tear it out. I know it doesn't belong here.

I'm sorry it is here. I know it hurts. But there the Lord would look, says, you know, he says, no, you tear it out.

If you want my blessing, you want me to flood the place, you want me to fill the house, you want a fresh work, then you tear it out. And so often, you know, we just, these little things, they have this amazing way of creeping in and then they're just there. I remember sometimes, I have three sons, and one time when one of them was quite young, you know, early teens, maybe, walked into his bedroom one day.

And here's a picture of one of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders and a great big, you know, poster on the wall. And I'm looking at this thing and they, you know, she was, she was not there because my son was a great football fan at the time so much, I don't think, and wanted to be reminded of the Dallas Cowboys. As I looked at that and realized, well, I can see why that came here.

But I took the picture and I went down and I decided, I hung it in the living room. And later on my, you know, when my son comes home and here's this in the living room, what's she doing there? I just said, oh, she's such a beautiful girl, I think we should all enjoy her, don't you? And it's amazing on how so often, you know, there are things that we just have in one place that if we put them in another place, we'd realize this has really no place at all. You know, so, you know, so often, well, that's my room.

And I had to clarify, I beg your pardon, I don't know where you ever got that idea. That is not your room. That's my room.

I pay for it. Everything that I painted, I put in the carpet, I pay the utilities on, it's my room. And you're my child, I brought you into the world, I can take you out.

You can't have the picture. But it is something there where, when we look there in our homes, in our lives, where we realize if there is something that shouldn't be, then it shouldn't be. And we just determine whether there's vocabulary that we use, there's language, there's behavior, that we would realize, God,

these things, can they actually obstruct blessing? Can they obstruct our joy? Do they get in the way of our happiness and our peace? Have we allowed things to creep in that they should not be here? And here is Gideon, wonderfully, you know, though he struggled with it and was fearful about it, he did it.

Though he did it by night, he did it. And I think to me that when we begin to look in our lives, and if there's anything in our own, as insignificant as it may seem, but anything in our own home, our own lives, our own, you know, experiences that we would look at and say, I wonder if that could be blocking and getting in the way and stealing something of my heart and my affection of where it ought to be and quenching the joy. What a wonderful thing that can begin to happen.

But though Gideon struggled, the point is he did it. He did it. He also struggled in his faith in other ways as well.

Gideon, of course, is the character in the Bible that the famous fleece. And people say, well, you should just, you want to know God's will, you just, you should, you know, just have a fleece over the matter. You need to put a fleece before God is the phrase so oftentimes used.

And it was used because in chapter six in verse 36, it says, here Gideon, when he's trying to determine if God's really speaking to him, he says, Gideon said unto the Lord, if thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou has said, God, if you really are, if you really want to bless and you really want this to happen, I'm sorry, I'm just struggling terribly with it. But he says, if this is so, he says, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor. And if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry on the earth beside, then I shall know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand.

And so he decided, I'm just going to take this piece of wool, you know, their skin there, and I'm going to put it out on. And then what I want you to do is just have it be full of dew and everything all around it dry tomorrow morning. He wakes up the next morning, he picks it up and he wrings it out and a whole bowl full of water comes out of the fleece.

And the earth all around it completely dry. Exactly what it was he asked God for. Then it goes on, verse 39, and Gideon said to the Lord, let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once.

But let me prove I pray thee, but this once with the fleece, let it now be dry only upon the fleece and upon the ground, let it be dew. And God did so that night for it was dry in the fleece only and there was dew on the ground. So here he has this fleece.

He gets exactly what it was he asked for. It's wet, all dry. And now he reverses it.

So, all right, let's try this again. I'm still not sure. I mean, who knows how this happened? I don't know how it happened.

But now this time, let's let the fleece be dry and the ground. If it's really you, I don't want to get you hot. I don't want to get you angry.

But I just can't believe that you really want to bless me this way. I'm struggling so hard with it. And so he says, OK, wakes up the next morning.

It's all wet all around it. The fleece is dry. You know, it's interesting.

Oftentimes I hear people say, well, you don't know what to do. Ask God for a fleece. But, you know, the interesting thing is the guy that did it didn't work for him in the first place.

And yet we still oftentimes do it. I've done it. And I'll tell you, basically every time I've ever really done it, my mind, I always also seem to figure odds.

OK, I mean, if I did this fleece because I kind of want this to happen or I don't want this to happen, whatever it may be. And then you kind of pick something the way it might happen that you think it would probably happen naturally if you want it or the way it would be miraculous if you didn't. And it's like one time I literally was teaching Bible study and a couple pulled up the house.

She was late. It was at their home. And she drives up in this brand new, beautiful, I mean, brand new Mercedes or Chevrolet for people who live in Newport Beach.

But anyway, she pulls up in this brand new, beautiful Mercedes and she gets out her husband. I said, that's a beautiful car. And he says, my, it is.

And I realized he'd never seen it before either. It was new to him. And I said, and she hears her story.

She said, yeah, I know. She says, I've been going to work every day. And as I've been going to the office, I drive by and I just saw this.

It's been sitting there on the floor, showroom floor, the dealership every day. And so I went by this morning. I just prayed.

I said, Lord, if you want me to have it, have it be there on my way home. So I left early and there it was. Is that the Lord or what? Now, me, I'm one that I just get it and repent later.

I don't try to bring God into it. But so often we have this nature that Lord, if you really want this, then do this. You know, you know, it's kind of like my, you know, when Jean, you know, she prays and said the other day, she said, Don, can we pray that the Lord takes one of us home so I can go visit my brother? And it was very sad.

But anyway, we're still alive. That's a joke. I was supposed to, you're supposed to laugh.

Go visit. One of us dies so I can visit my brother. Think about it.

I mean, in other words, you die. But anyway, the, just kidding. My, my father-in-law used to always say the kid, my mother-in-law about that.

Yeah. She's praying. She said, let's pray that one of us dies so she can go visit her sister in Minneapolis.

But anyway, the, so often we want something and we have ways in our mind of playing these games when we just are so often really struggling with the love of God. Struggling with his desire to work and to bless and to do wonderful things for our lives. And here Gideon, as he's struggling with God, do you really want to use me? But as he went through it, his faith was struggling.

That's the point to me. So often, I'm so grateful that here Gideon, this wonderful man of faith that the Bible looks at, struggled just like we do. And the struggle didn't end here.

Over in chapter seven, verse nine, he's still going on, still struggling with it. It says, came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, arise, get thee down to the host, for I have delivered it under thy hand. But, here the Lord speaking to Gideon, if thou fear to go down, and he says, go thou with purr of thy servant down to the host, and thou shall hear what they say.

And afterwards shall thy hands be strengthened to go down under the host. Then he went down with purr of her servant under the outside of the armed men that were in the host. Here the Lord says, all right, look, Gideon, if you're still afraid, if you still don't believe, if you still have such a trial trusting me, go down to the enemy's camp tonight, just sneak into it.

You take purr and just mosey on into the camp. There are 120,000 of them. You go down there.

And he says, and just listen to them. Verse 12, it says, and the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east lay along the valley like grasshoppers for a multitude, and their camels were without number in the sand, the sea in multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and he said, behold, I've dreamed a dream.

And lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian and came unto a tent, and he smote it that it fell, and overturned it that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered, and he says, this is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the man of Israel. For his hand hath God delivered the Midianite and all the host.

Here and then at verse 15, it says, and it was so when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation of there, he worshiped, and he returned to the host of Israel. And he said, arise, the Lord has delivered unto your hand the host of Midian. Now think about this.

Here you've got a guy, he's struggling over and over with God, with his voice. Did you say this? And he'd do it. He'd prove it again and again.

And then he still struggles, no matter what. And then finally, the Lord says, listen, Gideon, if you're having a tough time believing me, and you're still afraid, go down and listen to the enemy, and listen to what he has to say. And the next thing, he goes right down, which tells you what? He was afraid.

And he gets down there, and he sneaks into camp, and he comes over by a campfire, so one guy says, I can't believe I had this dream. It's a terrible dream. Oh, really? What's the dream? There was this cake of barley.

It just came down on the hills, hit the tent, destroyed everything, you know, and we were wiped out, this whole thing. And the guy looks at him, he says, oh, no, this is nothing other than the hand of Gideon, God's hands upon him. Gideon listens to that.

He runs back up to the men, and he says, guess what? The Lord has delivered unto us the hand of the Midianites. Now, think if you were the Lord. I mean, you're God.

You've done everything you can possibly do to tell this guy there that your power, and your love, and your goodness, and what you're going to do. And then he's still afraid. He says, hey, if you don't believe me, why don't you go down and listen to the enemy? He goes down, believes the enemy.

If I was God, I'd just be shaking. I cannot figure you out. If I was God, I'd need therapy, you know, or something.

I'd be in, you know, in sessions. They're wondering why it is that so often, you know, God, we pick up his word day by day. It says these powerful things, these eternal things, these wonderful things, these unbelievable commitments.

And we can be so down, or so depressed, or so frustrated. And yet, you know, and no matter what we read, I can't find it. There's nothing in here.

I read from one end to the other. God's just not speaking to me. And somebody else can come along.

And the slightest little thing. And we rely on humans, human beings. Sometimes even, you know, we have to see something out there of a hopelessness somewhere else before hope from God can sometimes come in.

Instead of just relying totally upon his word. But when we, but Gideon though, the wonderful thing is though he struggled with all these things, that's what I love about it. Because isn't that me? Isn't that you as well? Isn't that the story of our own lives, of our own growth, of our own processes of learning faith? Let humility there though, that he did finally have.

And you realize, God, I can't believe you want to bless me. And then when finally his faith began to grow and you find him actually resting and being obedient, God says, go destroy it. Gideon, you will know a blessing.

You will know a peace and a power. Clean it up. Make a place for me in your heart and in your home.

And then a secondary to me that is so important there and the key to blessing is not just simply to look at God's tool in a sense of Gideon there, but to tell you that he wants to work into where he just says humility and obedience, do it. But he wants to bring together a consecrated army. He wants to really bring together an army that is consecrated of one heart and one mind to get the job done.

Back in chapter six, verse 33, it says that all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the East were gathered together and they went over and they pitched in the Valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout Manasseh and also gathered after them and gathered after him.

And he sent messengers unto Asher and under Zebedelim and under Naphtali and they came up to meet them. Chapter seven, verse two, jump over there. It says, and the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee, there are too many, that are there for me to give Midian unto thy hands.

He says, lest Israel vaunt itself, gets all puffed up against me, saying, mine own hand has delivered me. There were 32,000. We'll see that in a couple of verses.

Gideon goes out to start to go at a battle against them, blows the trumpet, and God gathers together all he can. 32,000 men show up. And now they're up against an army of 120,000, about four to one.

They're outnumbered. And here though, the Lord comes to Gideon as he's wanting to put together the way he wants to do the blessing. And he tells him, he says, Gideon, we've got too many.

And I imagine Gideon thought, what? What do you mean we got too many? This is too many people. There's 120 enemies, 120,000 enemies. We've got 32,000.

Yes, there's too many, but you got, go back and look at the drawing boards. The numbers are wrong. We're outnumbered.

We, you know, by them fourfold. And he says, no, you're just one that if you do with this number, you win the battle, you'll think it was by your own hand. I want you to put yourself in a place where either God comes through, there's no tomorrow.

I want you to put yourself in a place where your faith and your trust is so obedient, it's so rich, it's so full that then I can work. And then it'll be for my glory. And he says, so we've got to cut it down.

We, you know, we've got too many here. And so in verse three of chapter seven, it says, now therefore go proclaim unto the ears of the people saying, whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned to the people 20 and 2,000, there were remain 10,000.

So there's 32, 22,000 have left. Gideon gets up and he tells them all, listen, any of you here, he says, any of you who are fearful and afraid, you can go home. And if you can imagine, you know, Gideon, they're looking at this whole thing and telling, okay, you can go home.

And he watches 22,000 of them going home. And I know Gideon in his heart, proud to say, can I go to, you know, I mean, in his own, you look at this man, he's so human, but he's looking there and he's realizing 22,000, God, what are you doing? And you know what? An interesting thing here, because here you got 32,000, 22,000 of which when they blew the trumpet, 22,000 came. But there was also, I mean, 32,000 came, but 22,000 of them, they were absolutely in agreement, I suppose, with the other 10,000.

They were sick and tired of the oppression. They were sick and tired of what was happening. They hated the evil.

They hated the wickedness. They wanted a godly nation. They knew what was right.

They knew what had to be done. They wanted peace. They wanted freedom.

They wanted everything. They subscribed to all the right things. But yet at the same time, when they came face to face with the enemy, they were unwilling to do anything.

They were afraid. Oh, what a commentary I think that is sometimes, even on the church, and how often. So many people, I don't like this, and this, something needs to be done about this.

And you can blow the trumpet and they will sign the petition. They will do whatever else it is. But then when it says, will you go to battle against it? No, I won't.

They don't like it. And I hate it. And I disagree with it.

And we don't need it in our world. And it's junk, or it's trash, or it's terrible, or it's wicked, or it's evil. But at the same time, he looked at them and realized, but they were afraid.

They were afraid. And here there's something there where, you know, what happened? They looked at the enemy and all that was happening, and fear is basically a very simple little equation. The amount of fear

that anybody has in life is simply the size of the enemy they're up against in reference to the size of their God.

That's all it is. That'll always dictate the quantity of fear that there is in a human heart. And when there's somebody there that they look at their enemy and God is smaller than their enemy, fear comes in.

But when there's somebody there that they look at their enemy and God is bigger than their enemy, peace comes in. And that, but when the enemy is bigger than your God, you'll always have fear. And you don't want to lead 32,000 men into battle or 22,000 when they're right in the heat of the battle, and their own, you know, heart will paralyze them.

They'll find themselves unable to raise the sword, lacking to have the strength and the courage to put their life out on the line for something, and they'll turn and run. That'll destroy the whole battle. And here the Lord looks at Gideon, and he says, anybody that's afraid, anybody that I'm smaller than the enemy, tell them they can go home.

Tell them it's okay. They'll get the, they'll enjoy the blessing later when we set them free, but they'll look back and realize they missed the greater portion, the heat of the battle themselves. You know, to me, the interesting thing, I, in all honesty, I don't think there was a big difference between Gideon and these 22,000.

Look at Gideon, he would say, I'm a chicken too. I have fears too. But the one, the only difference to me between a mighty man of valor and a chicken, I suppose, in a sense, or a man with no courage at all, is that a mighty man of valor is just somebody who fears God more than the enemy.

He simply looks there and he says, I can't go any other way. God, I fear you, you know, more than anything else. And the others fear the enemy more than obeying and trusting and pleasing God and giving God the opportunity to work in their life.

But oh, when we looked there and said, no, God, I want you to work. And then interestingly enough, so now they're down to 10,000 people. And the Lord looks at him, he says, Gideon, still got too many.

And in verse four, and he says, the people that are yet too many, bring them down to the water and I will try them there for thee and what shall be done of them that I say unto thee? This shall go with thee and the same will go with thee and whomsoever shall stay, will stay. And he says, and so he said, I want you to take all the 10,000 now down to the river. Now, I want you to take them down to the riverbed and give them all a drink of water.

And then I'm going to separate them into two groups. In one group, I'm going to tell you, tell them to go home. In the other group, they're going to stay with you.

Okay. What do you mean we got too many? Now it's 120,000 against 10,000. But he says, now I want you to have them go down.

And it says in verse five, it says, so he brought down the people into the water and the Lord said unto Gideon, everyone that lap at the water with his tongue, as a dog lap at him, him shalt thou set by himself. Likewise, everyone that bowed down upon his knees, shall drink. And the number that lapped, uh, of them that lapped putting, uh, their hand to their mouth were 300 men.

But the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink the water. What an interesting thing. God says, now take 10,000.

I want you to take them all down there and tell them they can get a drink of water. They're all thirsty. Give them a drink.

And he says, now I want you to watch them drink. And he says, and as they drink, I want you to separate them into two groups. If there's one that get down on all fours and they just like a dog and they just kneel in it and, Oh, thirsty, drink it in.

You should set that, separate them into one group. And he says, and the other ones that pick it up in their hand and bring it up to their mouth, separate them in another group. And here, what an interesting sort of thing to do.

And then of course, as it ends up, there's 9,700 of them that lapped like a dog. And there was 300 of them that lifted it up in their hand to their mouth. And he got these two groups.

And he says, well, this point Gideon's probably thinking, well, hate to lose 300 more, but at least I'll have 9,700 to go into battle. And then the Lord says, tell the 9,700 to go home. We only want the 300.

And you wonder what is in this? What an interesting sort of thing. And here, but basically what is happening is 9,700 of the, of the people that, you know, that went home, the second group of people, they were merely a group of people that essentially spent unnecessary amounts of time or energy on necessary things. They were all thirsty.

They were all drinking, but there was something there that they just, that was, they were just indulging themselves in. And the other ones were lapping it up like they know the Midianites, the Amalekites and the armies from the East are surrounding them. They're all there.

They know they're in a battle. And as they go down, they lift it up and they're looking, you know, around and we're 9,700 of them. That's all, they're just, I'm thirsty.

They're all thirsty. But 9,700 of them spent an inordinate amount of time on necessary things. And, you know, I think that God, he loves us to enjoy our life.

And he, but so often many people as even I look at Christians, how many of them can spend so much of their time between their job and their, their sleeping, eating, your pleasure, TV, sports activity, shopping, all the things that just fill up a life and just simply where, you know, nothing wrong with them, nothing sinful about them. Nothing may be corrupt about them at all that you may look at, but it's just, it takes up their entire life. And they almost have a vacation attitude in a war zone.

Here could you imagine, it's almost like somebody going over, they join the army, they're going over to Iraq, they're being sent over there and they email ahead to see if there's a Hilton with a jacuzzi in it, you know, and something. And instead of, no, I'm going to war. And here the Lord, he looks at Gideon and he says, Gideon, the people that are going to know the greatest blessing, the ones that I want to pour out my mightiest and greatest things upon, are people that whatever it is that they'll build an altar, they'll begin to wipe out the things in their life that are not necessary, out of their home and out of their behavior, things that corrupt them.

And then they'll have a way that they begin to drink, you know, take the things of life that they need to sustain them, but they also look around at the battle that they have around. They want to see their life being used for something. Many people go through their whole life and never strike a single blow for the kingdom of heaven.

They never would know what it is to say, God, take my heart and take my life. Not just simply bless me and do all of this, but God use me to set many other people free. There's a war going on.

There's homes and marriages and families being annihilated. There's people all around that need you and need your love and need your power and need your goodness. And here when the Lord ends up with these 300, I'm sure he smiled like he never, the 32,000 or the 10,000 never blessed him.

As he looked here, there were 300 men. If you could imagine there, you look at each other at the end. You're separated.

Gideon says, you're the army. And have these guys look at one another and say, okay, is this going to be exciting or what? We probably thought we're all, you know, martyrs for the cause or something. Probably thought in their own eye, we haven't a chance, but they look there.

But if there's a reason to live, this is it. If there's a reason to die, this is it. I have no idea how anything could happen, but to realize here that God loves to look at people who are prepared to venture something for the great enterprise of their life, of the moment.

God, take my life and do something wonderful with it. And they absolutely lack all the self-consciousness. They could care less about that.

They look there, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And here there's something there for that. They're prepared to put their whole life on the line.

That's a person who's going to know the greatest joy and the greatest peace and the greatest fullness and the greatest blessing. And that's really the greatest battle, by the way. The rest of the message is over now, essentially, other than just a few thoughts.

Look at the triumph in a moment. The wonderful thing that God wanted to give them and the victory they had, but the great battle that God has in life is with you and with me of bringing me to a place. Will I make a place for him? Will I build an altar? Will I be obedient? Will I find my life getting up and saying, Lord, I do mean business? And where I also want a take of my life, and I want it to be used, truly used, for the battles of life, that I'm not an island unto myself.

It isn't a thing that I just wake up. If I'm okay, I'm okay. But it's something there.

Hey, if others are not okay, I'm not okay. Those are the people that know the greatest of all. Those are the ones that end up catching a glimpse of heaven, of realizing the passion in the heart and the nature of God.

Why Jesus Christ came? Why our Lord and Savior went to the cross. He looked there, and within his heart, he says, it isn't an issue if he's okay. Jesus' attitude, I'm not okay until you are.

And for that, I'll die, lay in a tomb, rise from the dead, and I'll come back, and I won't spend eternity lapping up the water like on his forest. He's there. He looks there, and he's caring for you and me day by day by day, waiting for one day that I would catch the passion of his heart and let it get infused within me and say,

I'd love to be one of your 300, live for you on these terms.

That's the battle. The rest of it was easy. One of them is because now the most ridiculous thing in the world.

Now he's got his 300, and the Lord just has them where they take, okay, break them up into three groups of 100 each. Give them all a clay pot, and inside the clay pot, put a torch. And he says, give them some trumpets.

Get them off into these three groups, and he says, and at night time, the thing that we're going to do here, and all that they did is that at one point, at one moment, he had them all shout there as they blow the bugle, and they all shout, sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon. And next thing, at one moment, they'd all break these pots. A torch would come up, and the assumption that it's seemingly that all the Midianites had at each one of those torches probably represented a general bringing a thousand with him.

And that there, they're looking there, and they see they're surrounded. It's all of a sudden, in a moment, all these torches, 300 of them. Oh, no, how huge is an army like that? It's got to be unbelievable.

Meantime, there's each one of these guys. No, that's it. This is it.

Nothing more to it. And they just stand there. Next thing you know, every man's sword turns against them, and they're confused in their battle.

You get the Midianites who don't really know the Amalekites and the other army from the east, and they don't know who's who and who's on each side. Next thing you know, they're killing each other, and then they start running. And then they start running after him.

And then after that, then the other nations, the other tribes that didn't, when Gideon blew the trumpet, and they didn't come, they weren't interested. Then they come, and they rebuke Gideon and say, what are you doing? I'm doing the fight. We're the army.

You didn't call the stronger. And he said, you know, I'm sorry. Please come and help us.

We couldn't do it without you. Would you help us? And they jumped in and joined. But the thing is, is they ended up having a greatest of blessings, their land, God's hand back upon them, the joy of the Lord filling their hearts, filling their lives.

And the amazing thing is that when you just look at this thing, I can't help but wonder at the end of the day, after they destroyed, they killed tens of thousands of the Midianites. Great, unbelievable victory of just bodies scattered all the way from the valley of Jezreel to the borders. But at the end of the day, as they find themselves sitting around the campfire, looking back at what happened, how this battle happened, how it was won, I wonder how many of those men had to sit there and say, 300 guys, clay pot, you know, torching the thing, shout out, and then probably sat around and thought, I could have done that.

Who couldn't do that? And the point is, anybody could have. Anybody could have. Anybody could have.

They desperately wanted it. And here was something there that anybody who's prepared to let the clay pot of their own heart be broken and let their light so shine and say, God, take my life and do wonderful things with it for your kingdom and for your glory. Anybody can do that.

Anybody can be part of those that there that God would look at that for the enterprise of life, they see it and they understand it and say, God, take me, use me, do something wonderful with it. That's what it's all about. And when we can find our heart there, that's the battle.

Winning it is nothing because then it's all at the end of it. They have to say, we didn't do anything. God did it all.

And they give him the glory. It wasn't something there where you go through and they, you know, each guy went out and destroyed 300 men on his own or some sort of a thing. No, God did it all.

The battle wasn't the Midianites. The battle wasn't all the things that seemed to oppress us. The battle was surrender.

The battle was faith of simply saying, God, I'm afraid and I know there are things that shouldn't be. And I want to clean them up. And God, I want to obey you.

And I want to offer myself to you. That's the battle. Is it not in every one of our lives to be able to come and say, Lord, I want your blessing with all my heart.

And let's go for it. May the Lord take your heart in the battles and the struggles and the needs for joy and peace. And may God break you like that clay vessel.

And may you just let his spirit fill you and shine through you. Trust him. Get up, build an altar, read his word.

And when it says something to you, let God be true and every man a liar. Trust him and him alone. Father, we thank you for your love and we thank you for your word and your desire to take our lives and do wonderful things.

Lord, I just pray for each one of us in our own battles and our own desires for the blessings, the hand of God to be upon us. And Lord, may you take your word today and may, as we realize Gideon, we identify with him more than we'd ever dream of it. He's just like us.

The same struggles, same issues. Lord, may you, Lord, help us and strengthen us as you did him. Lord, may you convince us that you want to pour out your blessing upon us, that you care for us, that if you spared not your own son for us, will you not give us all things? Take our lives, Lord, and do a wonderful thing.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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