

Gideon #3: The Manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total reliance on God's Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ in Bible study, highlighting the preeminence of Christ and the power of God's Spirit in the face of human weakness.

Duration: 1:14:00

Scripture: Judges 7:9

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

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Gideon from the Old Testament. He compares Gideon's victory over the Midianites to the confusion caused by hanging chads in Florida. The preacher emphasizes that God's power is greater than our own and that we should rely on Him. He also highlights the importance of being in God's presence and being a blessing to others. The sermon concludes with a call for believers to trust and volunteer to be instruments of God's work.

Transcript

Well, good evening, brothers, again. As we come to the study of God's Word, there's a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, a principle we can't take for granted, we can't live without. And that principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit.

I'm going to ask you to turn just for a moment, please, before we pray and ask the Lord to guide us, to Matthew chapter 11, if you would. Matthew chapter 11, please. And beginning at verse 25.

At that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well pleasing in your sight. All things have been handed over to me by my Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

My yoke is easy. My burden is light. As you have probably heard many times, those precious verses at the end of Matthew 11 are applied to the sinner who has never come to know the Lord.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And there is no question about it, God's truth can be applied to everybody. It can be applied to the sinner who has never come to know the Lord.

But I think it is precious to realize that the context is not inviting sinners who have never come to know the Lord to come to know Him. The context is Bible study. Context is how to understand this book.

Jesus looked up to heaven and He said, I thank you, Lord. I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and the prudent. You have revealed them unto little babes.

It was good in your sight. It was your way. You took pleasure in that.

Then He said, nobody knows the Father, only the Son. Nobody knows the Son, only the Father. Then He adds, whoever the Son will reveal Him.

And it's to understand this book that He says, all you who are weary and heavy laden, come to Me and learn of Me. I'll be your teacher. That's what He's saying.

If you will come to Me, if you're weary of studying the Bible and not seeing anything, not hearing the voice of God, not having the Lord revealed, Jesus invites you to let Him be the teacher. Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest.

Learn from Me, Jesus said. My yoke is easy. My burden is light.

He wants to be our teacher. Now, we can't work up some attitude of childlikeness. He's got to work it in us.

But He's promised He would. If we could come as dry ground, He'd rain His fresh water on us. If we would come with our mouths opened wide, He would fill us.

If we would come as little babes, He'd reveal these things to us. We are fools if God tells us the hiding place, and then we can't find the treasure. All these things.

All the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hidden in Christ Jesus. We know the hiding place. Shame, shame on us if we don't go to that hiding place in order that God might reveal His treasures.

We're talking these days about the presence of the Lord. Let me read without comment one verse on the presence of the Lord. It's from the book of Acts.

I told you I've been going through Acts and how God has been cleansing my heart as I've gone through this book. But Acts chapter 3, verse 19, repent and return so that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Isn't that a glorious truth? Times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that He may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you.

Let's pray together. Our Father, again this evening, we thank You so much for Your precious Holy Spirit who lives right inside of us, who lives in our heart. The life of God.

Thank You that it's Your pleasure to reveal the Son of God to us. We know that it's not possible to know the Father unless You will to reveal Him unto us. Create in us, we pray, that attitude of childlikeness that

receives from You.

Deliver us from sophistication in all of its subtle forms. Show us Yourself. Unscale our eyes.

Take the veil away. You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth. We ask in the all-prevailing name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I know Wayne wasn't here for the early part. Anybody else that wasn't here for any of the studies? We've got a couple of brothers that were not here. I'll try to give just a little of the flow.

Are you familiar with the Gideon story? That's what we're looking at. We're looking at the Gideon story. Just bear with me as I just pick up the flow so these brothers can walk right in step with us as we enter into the heart of the Lord.

We're discussing the glorious truth. It's expressed in Psalm 16:11. You will make known unto me the path of life.

In Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand, pleasures forevermore. Gideon discovered the truth that in the presence of the Lord is where the blessing is.

And Gideon had a great burden that God would bless his people. And God had to teach him what he knew so well that the blessing is found in the presence of the Lord. And the deeper you go into the presence of the Lord, the more the blessing will come and will flow.

Outside of the presence of the Lord is the opposite of fullness of joy. There's no joy outside of His presence. In the time we're looking at, Judges chapter 6, because of the sin of God's people, God had sent an oppressor and they had been reduced to living in caves and in dens like animals, like rats they had to be scavengers for their provision.

They weren't saved to live like that. They weren't redeemed from bondage to live in the dark holes and the damp caves. They were redeemed to enjoy the land, enjoy the Lord in all of His fullness.

And Gideon wanted so to be a blessing to the people, but he didn't know what to do. And so Gideon came up with a plan to help his people. And he began to beat the wheat against the rock at the wine press, in the foothills, in the lowland, so that the enemy couldn't see.

If he was on the highland, then they would see all of the chaff, the clouds of chaff, and come in and confiscate it. And so down in the lowland, he kept beating, but there was no wind to carry the chaff, and the chaff would fall with the grain, and he'd have to separate it. And he labored and he labored from dawn till dusk in order to have a provision for himself and his family and his neighbors and so on.

God looked down from heaven and God saw Gideon and his heart, beautiful heart that man had. God saw him in his service beating his wheat against the rock, getting nowhere, just surviving. And the angel of the Lord came down and talked to Gideon.

And he said, The Lord is with you. And Gideon said, I know He's with me, but look at my people. Look at your people.

And the angel of the Lord taught him what he knew so well, and that is that in His presence there is blessing. God began to draw Gideon into His presence. The Lord said, If you really want to be a blessing,

I'm not going to deal with them.

I'm going to deal with you, Gideon. God began to deal with Gideon, not the people. And He said, You must come into My presence.

And deeper and deeper, God brought him into His presence. And the deeper Gideon got into the presence of the Lord, the more the enemy started to fall apart and the more the blessings started to come on the people. Gideon was learning that as he went into the presence of God, then God would bless the people.

That's what we've been looking at so far. Gideon being brought into the presence of the Lord. Now, this morning I shared with you how God began by taking Gideon into the truth of the preeminence of Christ.

And remember the difference between preeminence and prominence. Preeminence is a one and only. Prominence is one among many.

You can have many prominent things in your life, but the Lord doesn't want to be prominent. The Lord wants to be preeminent. And Gideon was taken into the presence of the Lord and by the mighty power of God illustrated by the bull, he pulled down the bale and all the competing lovers that were vying for the affection of God's people and established in the high place a picture of himself, a symbol of himself.

At the core of blessing is the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he pictured all of that in the Gideon story. Along with the truth that Jesus was a one and only, God began to re-teach Gideon the truth of Zechariah 4.6. It's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

And that's about where we left off. When we left off, I was trying to show you how God was teaching Gideon that truth. He knew it, but he didn't know it.

It's one of those things that you know and God has to re-teach you what you know. And he asked for that sign. Lord, I'll know if you put the dew on the fleece.

And God did it. And then all of a sudden Gideon said, I'm not sure even then, because there's too much possibility that that's nature. And I don't want it to be nature.

I want it to be God. And so he flipped over the sign. He said, Lord, don't be angry, but do it another way, just so I can be sure it's not by might nor by power, but by Your Spirit.

And so God honored it. And now Gideon said, now I know. And then God said, let's see if you know what you know.

And then God began to reduce the troops. It's not by might. Not by power.

And God began to reduce the troops. And Gideon said, oh, oh, oh, wait a minute. I know it's by Your Spirit, but don't touch my troops.

That's where we left off. God was teaching Gideon what he already knew. And so the first revelation to the Lord is the preeminence of Christ.

And then it's not by might or by power, but by My Spirit. Now, this evening, I'm going to ask you to turn back to Judges 6, if you would. I want to back up a little and discuss the sign again of the dew on the fleece and so on.

And then we'll move into our new material. For the full blessing that Gideon desires for the people of God, he needs to go deeper into the presence of God. Once he has seen Him as preeminent, once he knows it's not by might or by power, that's a good starting point.

But now God invites him into the deeper blessing. Chapter 6 and verse 36, Gideon said to God, if You'll deliver Israel through me as You've spoken, behold, I'll put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there's dew on the fleece only and it's dry on all the ground, I'll know that You will deliver Israel through me as You've spoken.

And it was so. And when He arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, He drained the dew from the fleece, a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, Do not let Your anger burn against me that I may speak once more.

Please, let me make a test once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece and let there be dew on all the ground. And God did so that night.

It was dry only on the fleece and the dew was on the ground. Now remember, I told you the chief reason for the sign and then the repetition of the sign was to give Gideon the assurance that it's really God. Gideon did not doubt God.

But he had a lot of doubts about Gideon. Gideon doubted Gideon. And he just wanted to make sure that it was not natural, that it was not physical, that it was not man.

Now there may be a lot more to it than I'm going to say. A lot of commentators spend a lot of time on this fleece. And I don't know if you've meditated on this wonderful section of Scripture.

Was the fleece an emblem of the people of God? Was that God's people? God's flock? God's sheep? Was it a fleece because they had been fleeced by the enemy? Was there some symbolic meaning in the laying down of the fleece? Was he saying, I'm laying down my burden as He laid down the people of God? Some say a fleece is the beauty of the Lamb. In some way, does that represent our Lord Jesus Christ? Does that represent His beautiful flock? Does the fleece represent one thing and the dry land another thing? And then the reverse of that is the land of Gentiles? I read one commentator who said that Gideon was prophetic and he saw to the end of the age. And he saw Israel rejecting Christ.

And when their fleece went dry, then God sent His dew on the whole land. Did Gideon see all of that? I don't know if he did or not. Some have made a big deal out of some of these facts.

Now, you've got to pay attention to the wringing out of the fleece. That's what's important. Because in order to be redemptive, we've got to be willing to have God wring us out and become dry.

And then the bowl is important and the size of the water in the bowl, fullness in the bowl is important and all of that. I am inclined, because of the balance of Scripture, to believe that Gideon didn't just choose an arbitrary sign. I think he knew that the dew represented the blessing of the Lord all through the Scripture.

And I think he's saying, Lord, are You really going to bless Your people? Are You really going to send down Your dew? I think that was his heart. Now, I ask all these questions not to answer them, because I can't, but so that we don't miss the main thing. You see, the chief concern Gideon had was, I don't want to miss God's will.

Did He send me or didn't He send me? Did I hear Him right or didn't I hear Him right? Lord, I thought You said, You're going to bless. Are You going to bless? I don't think necessarily that laying down the fleece was Gideon laying down his burden. That sounds spiritual and maybe that will preach, but it's a little fanciful for me.

The bottom line is, I don't think there was any power in Gideon laying down the fleece or choosing a fleece or the threshing floor or the full bowl or something like that. The power is the Lord's. It's always the Lord's.

Before we leave this wonderful section, I want to settle on one misconception of the passage. Many have looked at Gideon as a great sign seeker, as somebody who was very subjective and always asking God, was full of doubts and asking God to give signs. A person who used physical signs in order to determine the will of God.

In fact, through this story and because of it, there's an expression called putting out a fleece. Have you ever heard that expressed? Have you ever done that? Putting out a fleece. I've met people who use that method to find God's will all the time.

They just put out a fleece. I remember in my early days when the Lord was beginning to dawn some of His light on this thick head, I remember sitting in my bedroom with my head bowed and I'd say, Lord, if You're real, blink the lights. Do something so I know that You're real.

Someone says, Lord, I'm going to know Your will if You provide the funds. Then I'll know. If You make my interview go well, then I'll know.

If I get the raise, then I know for sure. If You bring a certain person into my life that has the same burden, then I'll know for sure. Lord, just tell me.

If the house sells, then I know it's God's will. If the car sells, if I find the car within my budget, then I know this is God's will. So, Lord, let the phone ring.

Or let someone come. Or let someone say a certain thing. Now, I'm not trying to judge whether that's legitimate or not legitimate.

God knows the heart. But what I want you to see clearly is that is not what Gideon did. I want you to see that.

That's not what Gideon did. I'm not saying it's wrong to do that. That's a question all its own and needs to be answered somewhere else at another time by someone else.

Go see your elder. But the issue with Gideon, the issue with Gideon is not, how can I find God's will? That's not the issue with him. Do you know how I know that? Because Gideon knew God's will.

There's no question about it. Go back to chapter 6, verse 14. And the Lord looked at him and said, go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian.

Have I not sent you? And he said to him, O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh. I'm the youngest in my father's house. And the Lord said to him, Surely I'll be with you.

You shall defeat Midian as one man. Gideon knew the will of God. Nothing could be clearer than that.

Gideon's fleece was not to find God's will. It was to confirm God's will. That's not the same thing.

May God help you see the difference. It's not at all the same thing. As I said before, Gideon is not doubting God.

Gideon is doubting Gideon. And that, my brothers, is healthy. Gideon was doubting Gideon.

Chapter 6, verse 17. Gideon said, If now I found favor in your sight, show me a sign that it's you who speaks with me. In other words, he's saying, Lord, am I imagining this? Am I dreaming this? Is this a hallucination? Is it really you? I need a sign to know that it's really you.

He needed confirmation. Call attention to this. As I said, not to judge anybody who might try it the other way and use signs to find God's will, but to illustrate a wonderful truth.

And that wonderful truth is this. Brothers, faith is walking in light. Faith is walking in light.

You hear so much about blind faith. There's no such thing as blind faith. That is not in the Bible.

This idea of faith is a leap in the dark. Bull feathers. It's not a leap in the dark.

Faith is walking in light. It's walking in the light. Gideon had a word from God.

Now, he needed that word confirmed, but he had a word from the Lord. God often confirms His will after He's made it known before someone takes the next step. That's very healthy.

We've got to be men of God that move from light to light. From revelation to revelation, God gives us a word. God has never called us to believe in ignorance.

That doesn't mean there's no mystery in a clear word. I mean, God might tell you to march around the city seven times, and you'll have to scratch your head as you march, because you say, what are you doing having me go in circles? You might not understand, but it's clear. Walk around seven times.

You might not know all that that means, but it's a clear word. He might say, get out of the boat and walk on the water. There's mystery in that.

You don't know what that means. But it's clear. You know what you're supposed to do.

God says, hamstring the horses. Why would you incapacitate the fighting forces? It doesn't make sense. But it's a clear word.

And so God speaks clearly, and He asks us to believe His Word. Gideon's request for a sign was that he would be sure that it's God. Sure that it's the Lord.

I know what you said. I've heard what you said. But is that my imagination? Am I making that up? Is it just a feeling inside? Is it a dream? Is it a vision? Or is it really you? If you have a Word from God, and you need that Word confirmed, God will not be angry at you if you ask God for a sign.

He wants you to know His will. That's different than asking to find God's will and you dictate to the Lord a sign. It's healthy always to distrust yourself.

It's sin to distrust Him. But it's not sin to distrust yourself. Gideon's fleece was not to find God's will.

Gideon's fleece was to confirm God's will. I don't see any evidence in the whole record that Gideon ever doubted the Lord. But Gideon had an awful lot of doubts about Gideon.

And all the way he said, Lord, is this me or is it You? I don't want it to be me. And I think that's what that's all about. Well, enough.

I've given you enough for my entire satisfaction on that issue. Let's move on. That brings us to the next step in the development of this heart that will be a blessing.

If Gideon is going to be an instrument of blessing, into the presence of the Lord, Gideon must go. He saw the Lord already in grace unveil Himself as the One and Only. He's starting to learn it's not by might or by power, but by My Spirit.

And now God says, Gideon, if you really want them blessed, come again into My presence. And you must learn that this One who is everything, this One who is a One and Only, who is the entire list, the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega and everything in between, there can be no blessing until He who lives within as the preeminent One is released. He's got to come out.

He's got to be manifest. He is the One that blesses. And so God now begins to teach Gideon what it means to release the life of God, to manifest the light through broken vessels.

And that's what we're going to look at tonight. Let me sort of reveal this truth to your heart as I think it broke on the heart of Gideon. I'm going to read two passages and ask you to follow along, please.

The first is in chapter 6, verses 34 and 35. And so the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and He blew a trumpet, and the Abizrites were called together to follow Him. And He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they also were called together to follow Him.

And He sent messengers to Asher, to Zebulun, Naphtali, and they came up to Midian. Now in chapter 7, please. Beginning at verse 1, Then Jerobael, that is Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose early and camped beside the spring of Haran.

And the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Morah in the valley. And the Lord said to Gideon, The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands. For Israel would become boastful, saying, My own power has delivered Me.

Now therefore come, proclaiming the hearing of the people, saying, Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead. So twenty-two thousand people returned, but ten thousand remained. Then the Lord said to Gideon, The people are still too many.

Bring them down to the water, and I'll test them there for you. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, this one shall go with you, he will go with you. But every one of whom I say to you, this one shall not go with you, he shall not go.

And so he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink. Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouth, was three hundred men.

But all the rest of the people kneeled to drink water. The Lord said to Gideon, I will deliver you with the three hundred men who lapped, and will give the Midianites into your hands. So let all the other people go,

each man to his home.

Now in order to understand the truth of the manifestation of Christ, the release of the life of the preeminent One, God selects a remnant. From this point on in our discussion, I will refer to the three hundred as the remnant. I told you the other day that that is the Old Testament word for the New Testament overcomer.

It's the same idea. That's what these three hundred are all about. Through the remnant, God will manifest Himself, His life.

Glance again at chapter six, verse thirty-four and thirty-five. That passage has to do with those who were called. Glance, please, at chapter seven, one to seven, the second passage we read.

That has to do with those who were chosen. If ever a passage illustrated in Matthew 22, verse 14, this one does. Many are called, but few are chosen.

Thirty-two thousand, we read, responded to the call. And out of that thirty-two thousand, three hundred were selected by the Lord, were chosen to be a remnant. In order to understand the difference between the called and the chosen, let me focus for a moment on the three hundred, on the remnant.

Let me point out at the start that God was choosing a remnant, not a delta force. You know, the way it reads sometimes, and the way some people understand it, you'd think that the Lord is selecting Navy SEALs, or Army Rangers, or Green Berets. He's not doing that.

Listen, as I quote the New Testament, this is how God chooses. I Corinthians 1, verse 26, Consider your calling, brethren. Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God's chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong and the base things of the world. The despised things has God chosen.

Things that are not that He might bring to naught or nullify the things that are. And the reason He gives is the very reason He gave in the book of Judges. So that no flesh would boast in His glory.

I remember one time how the Lord used that passage in my life. I was reading 1 Corinthians, and I stopped as I came to these verses. It said, Consider your calling.

So I said, alright, I'll consider it. And I stopped. And I took it one word at a time.

And God said, Consider your calling. Not many wise. And I said, alright.

And I prayed. And I said, alright Lord, You're right. I'm not wise.

Okay, move on. Not many mighty. I said, alright.

I know I don't have any strength, any gifts, any talent. Not many mighty are called. Not many noble.

I said, alright, no problem with that. I've chosen the foolish thing. I said, come on Lord.

Alright, I'm foolish. The weak thing. And I stopped again.

I said, alright Lord, I'll take that. I'm weak. The base thing.

He's getting tough. Alright, base thing. Things that are despised.

Give me a break. And then I came to the next verse, and it said, things that are not. I don't even exist.

There's one thing to be cut down. And things that are not. That's His calling.

That's who He chooses. God's not trying to select in the 300 the strongest and the bravest and those who are most in shape and those who are the best trained. That's not what He's doing.

At first, that's how I read it. I read chapter 7.3. You're afraid? Go home. Can't use you in my army.

Where would we be? Think about it. If God said, are you afraid? Go home. We can't use you.

That's not Him. It's not His heart. What's that all about? Judges 7, 5, and 6. How do you drink? Did you kneel to drink? Why then they say, you violated 2 Timothy 2.4. You're not a good soldier.

You're not alert. And so on. God didn't choose the strong and the mighty when He chose these 300.

He chose the weak and the foolish. I think we need to look again. Did He send home the strong or the weak? Did He retain the strong or the weak? The Lord clearly tells us why He's reducing the troops.

Look at chapter 7, verse 2. The Lord said to Gideon, the people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands. For Israel would become boastful, saying, My own power delivered Me. Here's an amazing thing, brothers.

For seven years, they had been under the chastening of the Lord, living like animals in the holes of the ground. And now they're going to come out and have a victory and think they did it. Isn't it amazing the pride of man to take credit for something like that? Certainly, reducing the troops to 300 would have a humbling effect.

I think it would be insanity to try to take glory after God had made that kind of a reduction. In chapter 7, verse 3, we find out that it started off with 32,000 men. He's mentioned how many enemy there were, fighting forces, 135,000.

And so before God started reducing the troops, the odds were four to one against God's people. When the Lord sent home the fearful in verse 3, 22,000 men left, 10,000 remain. And the odds are now 13 1/2 to one.

Thirteen and a half to one and they'd still be proud, God said, if they had the victory. And so He reduced it again in verse 6 of chapter 7. And 9,700 went home and the odds are now 450 to one. Certainly, there's a humbling effect in reducing the troops down, so the odds are 450 to one.

It's a great illustration of 2 Chronicles 20. 2 Chronicles 20.15 says, the battle is not yours, but God's. Oh, exactly so.

In fact, God didn't even need the 300. I love that word from Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14.6. The Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few. He could have done it Himself, but He wanted this remnant.

But it's not only the number that is going to give God His glory, but it's the special people who make up that number. The difference between the called and the chosen. In order to make this intensely practical, let me just give you two characteristics of the remnant illustrated in this story of Gideon.

The first characteristic I find is this. The true remnant are those who have volunteered. Now, everybody volunteered.

All 32,000. But these are the ones who volunteered to be God's instruments. Volunteered to trust the Lord and let God do His work.

When the trumpet sounded, volunteers came running. 32,000 of them. But my question is, what did they volunteer for? See, they volunteered to do the job.

They volunteered to go to war. They volunteered to fight. They volunteered to face the enemy.

They volunteered to get the job done. They volunteered to serve. The 300, they were also volunteers.

But they didn't volunteer to do the work. They volunteered to let God do the work. It's not the same thing at all.

Here's an amazing thing. When God is searching for a remnant, you don't find this in many churches, He sends the volunteers home. Isn't that an amazing thing? We get so happy when people volunteer.

Is there anybody that's going to help? Somebody. Raise your hand if you'll help. And then somebody volunteers.

I'll do it. I'll take the class. I'll drive the bus.

I'll be an officer in the church. I'll set up the chairs. I'll teach the class.

I'll be a Sunday school superintendent. Sign me up. And we get all excited.

We pray for volunteers. God sends them home. Volunteers who volunteered to do the work were sent home.

And separated from them were the volunteers who volunteered to let God do the work. That was the first division. And so the issue is never do you volunteer.

We think that's spiritual when we volunteer. Okay, I'll do it. One robin does not a spring make.

And one volunteer does not a remnant make. It's not have you volunteered. Are you chosen? Are you selected? And God selects those who are going to trust Him and be selected by faith.

The second characteristic of the true remnant is that not only are those selected who volunteer to believe the Lord and to let God do the work, but the remnant are those who are separated. Separated from and separated unto. Not just from, but from and unto.

You say, well, who are they separated from? Well, certainly they're separated from the non-volunteers. But they're also separated from the volunteers who've come to do the job. They're separated from.

God works through separation. You know, when I read this, I thought, wouldn't it be better? The 300 were the same 300 when they were in the big number as when they came out of the big number. If you've got 300 remnant hearts, wouldn't it be better to have 300 of them and 31,700 extras? God said no, because when the 300 are with the volunteers who want to just do the job, the 300 are weak.

The 300 are in danger of not giving God the glory, of being proud. And it's not until the 300 are separated that they become strong. That's where their strength is in separation.

Separation is a power. It's a strength. It's a positive hindrance not to be separated and to be mixed with those who have only come, not to let God do the work, but to do the work.

He also separated the remnant unto, not only from the non-volunteers and from the volunteers who just come to do the job, but those who are separated unto Himself. Did you notice verse 3? Who's ever afraid and trembling? Let Him go home. You see, that's not new.

That didn't show up in Judges. That's in Deuteronomy chapter 30 where God gives the conditions of war. Listen to Deuteronomy 30 in verse 8. The officer shall speak to the people and say, Who's the man who's afraid and faint-hearted? Let him depart.

Return to his house so that he might not make his brother's heart melt like his heart. Fear is contagious. God said, If you're going to be afraid, leave.

Now, if you read the record carefully, you'll notice that among the 300, there were some who were afraid. Why didn't they leave? God said, Everybody afraid, go home. You say, Who was afraid? Look at Judges 7.10. God says to Gideon, If you're afraid to go down.

Gideon was afraid. But he didn't leave. There's something different about his fear.

And then later on, turn to chapter 8 in verse 20. One of the 300 was Jether, Gideon's oldest son. Chapter 8.20, The youth did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was just a youth.

There's a difference between the fear that the 300 had and the fear that sent people home. And here's the difference. If you're afraid, go home.

Do you know why they went home? Because they came to fight the enemy. They were afraid, but they came to trust the Lord. They're still afraid.

Afraid, though trusting. There's a difference. But these people didn't come to trust the Lord.

And so when He said, Anybody afraid, go home. They said, See you later. We're going home.

Because they were not trusting in the Lord. That ordeal by water. Chapter 7, verses 5 and 6 illustrates, I think, the same truth.

I have to confess to you. This is a tough one. I don't know how you approach this.

I can't make my own what the united voice of church history has agreed upon that this means. You know, I read all these commentators and they all seem to agree. And I read my Bible and I just say, Where are they getting that? I don't get it.

The general idea that they say is that those who knelt down were not good soldiers. Because they were just self-indulgent. And they were just trying to serve themselves.

And they were not prepared. They laid their weapons down. And the enemy could come up at any time and attack them.

And they just laid down and they had their face in the water. And all they could see was the reflection of themselves. It was just self.

And they were just trying to satisfy themselves. Maybe. I just don't see it.

I don't see where anybody laid a weapon down. I don't see where they were not alert. I don't know what that is all about.

I have an idea that like the others, they were trusting the Lord, though fearful. When I see dogs, I don't know what registers in your mind, but I think sort of like that Seraphim woman in the New Testament. Dogs connected to faith there.

And the dogs eat the crumbs under the table. I think what he's saying is this. The remnant are those that trust the Lord, though they're afraid.

And who trust the Lord, though they're despised. I think that dog is just an illustration of a despised person. Maybe you have more light on that and I'll certainly receive your light.

But I think that's the picture that God has given us here. The remnant are those who are separated from and separated unto. Separated from non-volunteers and those who've come only to do the work, but not trust the Lord.

And separated unto the Lord even though they're trembling. Separated unto the Lord even though they're despised. It's a remnant of faith.

When God is going to give a victory of faith, He's going to choose men of faith to do it. How wonderfully God deals with Gideon. He takes him into this secret place.

And now finally you've got this little remnant and they've been separated unto the Lord and they're set aside. 300 men who have volunteered to trust the Lord, to be God's instruments. It's almost as if chapter 7, 9-15 is a grand parenthesis.

See, the story, the climax of the story picks up in 16 and goes to the end. And you almost want to leave this parenthesis out, but God has put it in. And so let me just say a word about it.

That little parenthesis, chapter 7, 9-15, begins with the words in verse 10, If you're afraid to go down, go down with Purah your servant into the camp. I don't want to just jump over this without making a comment because in my experience, this story contains one of the most precious principles in all the Word of God. I wouldn't say every time, but pretty nearly every time I speak, I'm going to bring up this principle.

It's meant so much to me. It's one of those principles that is just you find it everywhere and here it is again. And it's this, that God always deals with us as and where we are in order to bring us to the place that He'd have us and to make us into what He would have us be.

I wouldn't trade anything for that truth. That God deals with us where we are. Did you notice that Gideon is constantly not trusting Gideon? Give me a sign, Lord.

Give me a sign. Give me a sign. This time he didn't ask for a sign.

God said, you need a sign. He didn't ask for it this time. He didn't say, Lord, if it's really you, just wait here and give me a sign.

He didn't say, let the dew fall on the fleece. Let the dew fall on the ground. There's no sign.

Because though afraid, he's going to trust the Lord. Though he's despised, he's going to trust the Lord. And he looks at those 300 and his old heart is just beating like this.

And he's saying, I don't know how it's going to happen. But we're going to trust the Lord. And then God comes to him.

This is so precious. God knows he needs a sign. And God's going to give a sign.

Brothers, can I just preach a little? You don't need to ask God for a sign. Certainly don't need to dictate a sign to God. I promise you this.

I promise you. If you need a sign, you'll get it. Absolutely God knows your heart.

If your heart is set on doing the will of God, if you need a sign, you're going to get a sign. I get tickled when I read this because this is the one sign that I think wouldn't convince anybody of anything. What a sign it is.

It's one of the most unconvincing signs I've ever heard of. Let me just sort of tell the story. He said, if you're afraid, go down with Porah.

And so they sneak down into the enemy camp. I didn't tell them when to go or what part to go. Just go down.

And just as they arrived there and they were hiding in the bushes, this guy comes out of the camp tent and he begins to tell his fellow a dream that he had. And here's the dream. Verse 13, Behold, I had a dream.

A loaf of barley cake was tumbling into the camp of Midian. It came into the tent and struck it so that it fell and it turned upside down and the tent lay flat. That was the dream.

I saw a barley cake. A cupcake. We're not talking about a boulder rolling down a hill.

We're not talking about an avalanche. We're not talking about a thunderstorm or some flash flood. I saw a cupcake and it came rolling down the hill and hit the tent and it knocked the tent over and then it went through the whole camp and it knocked down all the tents.

Gideon said, Yes! Would you put a lot of stock in the nightmare of a heathen? But that's a sign that he needed. God saw his heart and that's the sign that he needed. And when he dictated to the Lord and said, Lord, do this wonderful thing and God did this spectacular thing, he wasn't convinced.

But when this barley cake came down the hill, of course, I think it was the interpretation that gave him the most assurance. His fellow said, verse 14, this is nothing less than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the man of Israel. God has given Midian and all the camp into His hands.

He's hiding in the bushes and he hears that guy say, That's the sword of Gideon, son of Joash. He calls him by name. God has given the Midianites into His hands.

God knew that Gideon needed to see the enemy. They were afraid. They were defeated.

God knew that Gideon needed to see Gideon and that little remnant of 300. They're just a barley cake. That's all they are.

You know, barley was that humble food. That's what they fed the animals. That coarse grain.

Only the poorest of the poor ate the barley. Gideon said, I'm just a barley cake. And look what's going to happen.

Gideon needed to see the Lord. And when he saw just the logistics that they came down and they hid and they didn't know where to go and they went to the right tent at the right time just when he had his dream. It's marvelous! It's awesome.

And so we read in verse 15 when Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. What a glorious picture, this man worshiping the Lord. Thank You, Lord.

He didn't ask for that sign. God gave it to him because God is good and he knew that he needed the sign. He returned to the camp.

He looked into the face of the 300, his little barley cake, and he said, Now arise, for the Lord has given the camp into our hands. Oh, glorious picture, this. Christ could now be manifest through this separated group of volunteers.

Now, we have no record of how Gideon came up with this next plan. I have no doubt that it was the Lord somehow. But we don't have a record of it.

God taught to him. But if ever you have a passage that illustrates 2 Corinthians 10.4, here it is. 2 Corinthians 10.4 says, The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful to the pulling down of strongholds.

Did you ever see weapons like these? Let's read the text. Verse 16. He divided the 300 men into three companies.

He put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them with torches inside the pitcher. He said to them, Look at me and do likewise. And behold, when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do.

When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, then you blow the trumpet all around the camp and say, For the Lord and for Gideon. And so Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch when they had just posted the watch. And they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

And when the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers and held the torches in their left hands, the trumpets in their right hands were blowing and cried a sword for the Lord and for Gideon. Each stood in his place around the camp and all the army ran crying out as they fled. And when they blew 300 trumpets, the Lord set the sword of one against the other throughout the whole army.

And the army fled as far as those places you can read for yourself. Did you ever see weapons like these, brothers? Not a sword among them. Not a spear in all of the remnant.

Not a sling among them. Not a dagger. Not even a shield.

Trumpets. Torches. Vessels.

Glorious picture, this. This is the key to victory. You serious, Gideon, about wanting to be a blessing? Come on into My presence.

I've got something to teach you. You want the dew of heaven to fall on your people? Come into My presence. It's not your gifts that's going to bring down the dew.

It's not your talents. It's not your eloquence. It's not your great experience.

I'm going to shine through broken vessels. At first it bothered me when I read verse 21. The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon.

I said, forget Gideon. Why are you calling that? Why can't it just be the sword of the Lord? I mean, He should get all the glory. Why bring Gideon in? And I'll tell you why He did.

Although it's the Lord who brings the victory, He uses instruments. He uses the remnant. He uses brothers and sisters.

But He must shine through broken vessels. The remnant we've learned before was no more than 300 broken vessels. A pack of dogs.

Barley cake. I'm sure on the level of earth that God had arranged some strategy. You've got a picture of the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east down in the valley.

And it's in the middle watch. It's dark. It's in the middle of the night.

And all of a sudden, three groups of 100 men. I don't know if they broke it with the trumpet or if they hit it up against a rock or whatever, but they were holding pitchers and torches. And the pitcher was over the torch.

And when they broke the pitcher, lights. A hundred lights there and a hundred lights there and a hundred lights there. And I'm sure that those guys said, we're surrounded.

And when they heard those trumpets, they didn't think there were 300 men. They thought there were 300 leaders of troops. That there were an army up there.

I read. I don't know if it's true. Anybody know anything about camels? The Bible says they had camels innumerable in the camp.

And they tied the camels to the tent. And I heard... Yeah, you better believe it. I heard a camel is more easily spooked than a horse.

Can you imagine the chaos when all of a sudden, trumpets, 300 trumpets are blasting and lights and these camels that are tied to the tent, they begin running this way and that way. They didn't know what was happening. And they thought the enemy's on us and it was upside down and somebody bumped into them and took a sword and they began to kill each other.

And when it was all over, out of 135,000, there were only 15,000 left. And they're on the mountain and they're just standing there blowing their trumpet, holding the light. You want to know how to win a victory? Oh, I'll tell you.

This is one of those glorious stories in the Old Testament. This is the sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon. He brought confusion there the same way He recently brought it to Florida with hanging chads.

We're not left on our own to try to figure out what's pictured by the trumpets and by the torches and by the vessels because the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reflected back on this story. Listen as I read 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6, For God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, is the One who hath shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.

We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not despairing. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

Struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our bodies. We who live are constantly delivered over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh.

Death works in us, but life in you. That's what Paul said. We're the vessels and we must be broken to release the life of Christ.

Such a glorious picture. Is that the path, brothers, to blessing? Are we serious? We have a burden for God's people, and they're living in the caves and in the hole. We say, I really want them blessed.

And then God said, alright. Then I will break you. And we say, oh, no, Lord.

Stop breaking me so that I can get on with the business of blessing them. God said, no, no. That is the business of blessing them.

For those who have gone with Gideon into the presence of the Lord and laid hold of some of these secrets, they've begun to see how God blesses. Brothers, the brothers and sisters in Christ who happen to be living in caves and those who don't know the Lord, those to whom the gospel is veiled, they don't need to see you, and they don't need to see me. And they don't need to see us.

They will not be blessed until they see Him. They must come into His presence, and His presence is brought to them as His presence is released from our life. He must be touched.

He must be seen. He must be experienced. He must be released.

He must be manifest. It's the Lord that must bring the blessing. Because, think of it, if He is not released, what do they touch? Just a clay pot.

They just touch a clay vessel. They touch us. They touch cleverness.

They touch scholarship. They touch eloquence. They touch logic.

They touch some material thing. They touch personality. And they're not blessed.

And it doesn't matter whether you're a painted pot, or some kind of a gilded pot, or a fancy pot, or a refined pot. It's the broken pot that brings the blessing. It's the broken vessel.

Every forward step you take in helplessness is a forward step in the knowledge of the Lord, and in the knowledge of His Word, and the blessing of God's people. Every forward step you take in weakness is a forward step in the knowledge of the Lord, and the knowledge of His Word and will, and in the blessing of His people. Every forward step you take in brokenness is a forward step in the knowledge of the Lord, in the knowledge of His Word and will, and in the blessing of His people.

If you're serious, brothers, about blessing the people of God, don't despise it. When God engineers your life and brings you to a place of weakness, and helplessness, and brokenness, He's got to release His life. He's got to let the light shine.

Gideon and the 300, in fact, the dew has begun to fall. They have known that God is preeminent. They've known it's not by might nor by power.

God has brought them to the place, and now they stand there as an illustrated broken vessel, and they just hold forth the light of Christ. And all of a sudden, the enemy begins to self-destruct. This is an amazing victory.

They begin to disintegrate. They haven't done anything except let Christ shine. That's how God brings the blessing.

There's one more step we need to take. We're going to take it in the morning, Lord willing. You've seen the preeminent Christ.

You've seen the release of His life. Gideon says, good, now let's go down and we'll help them out of their caves. God says, no, no, not yet.

One more thing. And He takes them into the glory of God. Brothers, pray that as we look at that clincher message, the Lord will minister unto our heart.

Because the people of God, they're hurting. They're hurting. And God is calling out a remnant.

Not a bunch of volunteers to do a lot of programs. He's calling out a remnant who volunteer to be His instruments and who volunteer, though afraid, to trust Him and though despised, to trust Him and to be separated. To be broken.

And He said, I will bless. I will send the... I'm going to answer the prayer of your life, Gideon. And then Gideon goes forward and sees this next vision that we'll look at tomorrow.

Well, let's pray together. Thank you for your attention. I'm sorry I went so long, but not too sorry.

Father, thank You so much for Your precious Word. Thank You for the glorious revelation that the light must shine through broken vessels. Thank You, Lord, for all of those measures and means You have to break us.

And we just pray that we would be willing, even though we're afraid, that we would be willing to trust You, even though we're despised, even though we're few, so that You might bring Your blessing upon Your people. Work it, we pray, not at all because we deserve it, but because our Lord Jesus deserves it. And

we pray it in His all-prevailing name.

Amen.

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