

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Faithful to the Weak

Judges 6 - 8

Introduction: I don't have the words to describe how glad I am to see you!

Even at a distance, even behind a mask!

Those who are worshipping with us online. We all are glad you are still worshipping with us.

BIG WAVE to our brothers and sisters who cannot be here yet. – WE UNDERSTAND! We understand why you are not here and are looking forward to when you can feel safe and comfortable returning.

PRAYER –

- Thanks for being able to gather; Lord work mightily to regather us all!
- Protection, Care
- Your faithfulness; OUR TRUST IN YOU. Amen!

Have I talked to you lately about the faithfulness of God?

I personally need to remember it daily. The more I watch the news, the more I need to be reminded! The more I am reminded and purposefully recall how very faithful God is, the better I do throughout the week.

So I am going to remind all of us a little more today by telling you of God's faithfulness to a man whose story is a personal encouragement to me.

- I am inspired and encouraged by the stories of people like Esther, Moses, Abraham, and Noah.
- But while I learn from each of them, I don't identify much with them.
- They are out of my league.
- No, to be able to say, now he was like me, I need a man of more humble standing.

That is one of the reasons I love the account of God's faithfulness to a man named Gideon.

The very first time we read about Gideon in the Scripture,

- Gideon disputes what the Lord tells him face to face.

- He denies that God is a miracle working God. AND
- He accuses God of willful neglect.

Look at the Scripture with me.

Judges 6:11-13 NKJV 11 Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree ... while ...Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!"

- 13 Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? **He disputed what God said.**
- And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' **He denied God's miracles.**
- **But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." He accused the Lord of neglect!**

How's that for a beginning?

Obviously, Gideon was in a stew. Why?

- For seven years the Midianites had been invading Israel at every harvest and stealing all the crops and cattle.
- Then they'd go back home.
- And every family had to start over.

Seven years! (And we think it's bad being threatened by a pandemic for two months!) And it is!

But imagine, this happening every February for another six years. Every February, it just starts over as if it were the first year.

That's why when the Lord appeared to Gideon, Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press, so he could hide some of the harvest from the Midianites who were on their way for the eighth year in a row.

So Gideon was quite literally in the pits. So if you've been in the pits lately over some part of what all is happening in our world and in our country, you can join me in identifying with Gideon.

And if you have not been in the pits about any of this, I encourage you to still listen closely enough that you catch the story of what God did in Gideon's life, so that when you do fall into the pits, whether because of the Coronavirus or something totally unrelated and maybe still a ways down the road, you can remember.

Because the only ones hearing this message who will not someday be in the pits like Gideon are those who die before they fall in the next pit. Job says man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

So what did God do with the likes of Gideon, and what can God do with the likes of me and the likes of you?

I'm glad you asked! Because the way God proved Himself faithful to Gideon is what I need this next week. And I highly suspect it is what some of you are going to need also, or God would not have put this on my heart to share with you this morning.

Let's walk through the Scriptures to see what God did for Gideon and does for us today.

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO GROW OUR FAITH.

- We have already seen that Gideon began with more doubt than faith.
- When God declared that it was YHWH speaking to him, calling him to become the new judge of Israel to deliver them from the Midianites, Gideon required a sign from God to prove it.
- Gideon prepared an offering and brought it before the Lord. The Lord touched it with a staff He carried and caused fire to come out of a rock Gideon had laid the offering on.
- Gideon's faith grows to the size of a mustard seed! God gives Gideon a task with which to exercise his new-found faith. As God grows us, He usually leads us to do something to put the growth to use!
- Then God told Gideon to destroy his father's altar to Baal, build an altar to the Lord, and sacrifice his special bull to God, Gideon obeyed. The way to retain growth!
- But even his obedience shows signs of young and beginning faith.
 - He enlisted ten men to help him.
 - He destroyed the altar at night.
- So Gideon starts gathering an army, every man he can get. But he is still very uncertain about whether God is going to come through with His promise. And now we come to the best known part of the account of Gideon.

Judges 6:36-40 NKJV 36 So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— 37 look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is* dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said."

38 And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.

39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew." 40 And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

- Gideon's fleece was not an act of faith; it was an expression of doubt.
- It was actually an act of disobedience to the commandment of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:16 ESV "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test,

- God had patience and mercy with Gideon, as He so often does with us.
- Gideon was very much like us.
- We are very much like Gideon!
- God grew the faith of Gideon to cause him to become one of the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11.
 - We think that those heroes had something we do not.
 - That is not true. Each of the men and women of heroic faith listed in Heb. 11, were just boys and girls, men and women just like you and me, with problems, and weaknesses, and sins, and frailties.
 - Gideon began very ordinary; God made him extraordinary.
 - God does the same transforming work in the lives of all who surrender to Him in faith.
 - Notice the points in Gideon's journey so far.
 - Gideon acted on his faith while it was still infinitesimally small.
 - While Gideon was scared to death to do so, he obeyed the Lord's command. God said, "Tear down your father's altar to false gods," and Gideon tore them down.
 - Do you feel like Jesus often says to you, "Oh, ye of little faith."? Do not despair. God can and will grow your faith. With the little faith you possess, just obey what the Lord is telling you to do right now.
- Every step we take in obedience is a step God uses to grow our faith.

When I answered God's call to preach in my senior year of high school, my Sunday school teacher asked me to go with him to the rescue mission and preach. I was scared to death. After I arrived, I was even more scared. But I preached. And my dear friend, as a result of that single sermon, revival did not break out in the city. In fact, revival did not break out in the rescue mission. In fact, as far as I know, nobody got saved that night. In fact, I will have to wait until I get to heaven to know what significant thing God did that night that He had me preach one of my

first and probably one of my worst sermons. But I know this much. God used that step of obedience to help me take the next step and the next in following His call.

Almost immediately after I surrendered to the call to be an Acts 1:8 pastor, I had an opportunity to go to Brazil. I had no particular affinity for Brazil. I did not even know a Brazilian. But I had told the Lord I would go, so I went. Eighteen years, more than 50 trips later, God has let us be a part of starting over 60 new churches, not because I had great faith, but because God took what tiny bit of faith I had and began to grow it with a single step of obedience.

Got a little faith? Then use it! God will be faithful to grow what faith you have.

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO GROW OUR FAITH AS WE LEARN WHO TO TRUST.

- Gideon enlisted an army of 32,000 men to face the invading Midianite army of 135,000.

Judges 7:2 NKJV And the LORD said to Gideon, “The people who *are* with you *are* too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’

- God sent the fearful home. Down to 10,000.
- God sent the cautious home. Kept the guzzlers; sent sippers home. Down to 300.

God said, “Now that’s about right.”

All talent and ability and every resource is from God.

- But God does not want us depending upon the resources.
- God wants us to depend upon Him.

God may or may not call you to serve using the talents and gifts you know you have.

- Don’t wait to serve until you see it is a match.
- If God is leading you to serve in a particular way, just say yes.
- He will work out the way your gifts and abilities will be used.
- When God called me into the ministry, I wondered, “Well, why did God give me some ability to do math and a love for doing it. Why does a preacher need math?” But God has used it in ways I could have never imagined, and always to my pleasant surprise.
- God does not want us trusting our abilities or even our spiritual gifts. God wants us to trust Him, and Him alone.

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO GIVE VICTORY HIS WAY, NOT OUR WAY.

- God sent Gideon's army around the encamped Midianites with torches under clay pitchers and a trumpet. On a signal, they broke the pitchers revealing the flame, blew the trumpet, and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."
- God sent confusion into the camp of the Midianites. Thinking they were being attacked from all sides by a huge army, they struck at anything that moved, slaying each other. One hundred and twenty thousand Midianites fell that night.
- The other 15,000 fled.
- Gideon pursued and enlisted the aid of men from Ephraim to finish the pursuit and kill the leaders.
- God gave Gideon and Israel a great victory and rid them of the oppression of the Midianites.

CONCLUSION: My friend, do you know the very best thing about this story of Gideon, this true story about a man named Gideon?

Gideon's story can be your story and my story. God can and will take us from where we are, to where God wants us to be.