

### *Hebrews 11:32*

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets

The author of Hebrews has been going through many examples of what it means to practically live by faith, i.e., how to let the truth about God's character and nature become the basis for all that we think and all that we do. The author began with the foundational belief that God created all that exists (which makes Him a pretty big God) and took us from Cain and Abel all the way through founding of the nation of Israel and their conquest of the Promised Land.

Now, in a final summation of the point that we must walk by faith and not by sight, for without faith it is impossible to please God, the author brings up 7 more examples. Now, the assumption is that everyone who is reading the letter knows in full detail the stories about these people so in our case I think we need to spend some time on each one and not just run past them as this sentence does.

So what of Gideon? This story of Gideon has so many parallels to our life and journey as we fight all the enemies within our soul. So keep your ears open.

The story of Gideon occurs during the time of the Judges; about 300 years or so after the nation of Israel was firmly planted in the Promised Land. The nation was a theocracy—where God Himself was the King—and the Torah (the writings of Moses) set forth the rule of law which governed the practical and religious life of the nation.

Now, from time to time God would raise up a Judge, not a judge as we would understand the word, but for all practical purposes, a lieutenant or viceroy in His administration. This Judge would be given specific commands and empowered supernaturally to carry out God's specific purposes.

Gideon was such a man. The Israelites had turned from the Lord and became steeped in Idolatry and began to worship the so called "gods" of the Amorites. So God handed them over to the Midianites who were extremely cruel, so much so that many of the Israelites abandoned their homes and were living out of caves or were tucked away in mountain strongholds. Not only did the Midianites oppress Israel, they would raid during each harvest season and take away all the food and any animals they could find leaving Israel reduced to starvation.

If you remember, Moses' first wife was a Midianite and it is to their people that Moses had fled when he first left Egypt. Moses' wife ended up leaving him and I guess things went bad from there. You know the old statement: hell has no fury like a woman scorned. Now, they were the enemy of Israel.

The Midianite nation is in what we now know as modern day Jordan; so they were not one of the nations that were dispossessed by the Israelites. They were just used as a tool of judgment by the Lord so that the nation of Israel would repent and return to their true King.

Midian was joined by the Amalekites, the sons of Esau who lived south of the Promised Land. They were the first nation to oppose the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt. In addition, the Midianites were joined by other Arab tribes east of the Jordan River. Let me read you a description of the invading forces:

### *Judges 6:5*

These enemy hordes, coming with their livestock and tents, were as thick as locusts; they arrived on droves of camels too numerous to count. And they stayed until the land was stripped bare.

Finally the Israelites cried out to God for help. Can you imagine, they had become so hard and separated from Him that it took almost complete destruction before they would even turn to Him and ask for help. But as soon as they asked, God answered. First He sent them a prophet who showed up and he said:

### *Judges 6:8-10*

..."This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of slavery in Egypt. I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all who oppressed you. I drove out your enemies and gave you their land. I told you, 'I am the Lord your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you now live.' But you have not listened to me."

You would think this would get the attention of the people and they would be like, "oh so that is why all this terribleness is happening." But no, they held hard and fast to their Idol worship.

When I read this story I think, "What morons, just give up the stupid idolatry and repent." But then I have to check myself as I think how all of us are just like them. Our idolatry is a bit different for sure, but does that really matter. We may

not have actual wooden statues and figurines, but we might as well. Too often it seems that it does not matter how much God tries to get our attention; for the most part we like to stick with what we know and hold hard and fast to all the ways that we play “god” and firmly rule over our own lives.

We constantly substitute our wisdom and our understanding for His. We tend to do what we want instead of what He wants. In fact, so often, we don’t even bother to ask Him what He wants because we either forget to ask or we just are afraid of the way He might answer.

But then when He decides to bring difficulty into our lives to lead us back to Him, we definitely ask for help. But even then, when we ask, it is often still just to get us out of our difficulty and it is not rooted in repentance for not trusting Him.

So, when you do read the Old Testament, I encourage you to give the Israelites a break and don’t judge them too hard for their stubborn rebellion because if we were really honest, we look a lot like them.

So the prophet comes and speaks his message and not a lot happens. Then the Angel of the Lord comes and He pays a visit to a man named Gideon who He finds threshing wheat while hiding at the bottom of a winepress to hide the grain from the Midianites. Now Gideon comes from a small family in the tribe of Manasseh and as we will find out he is hardly a candidate for being a hero of the people.

The Angel of the Lord (who we know is Jesus) appeared to Gideon and says: "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you" (**Judges 6:12**)! He meant it literally, physically, He was there; the Lord was with Gideon. I also love the way that the Lord always sees us not how we are in our flesh but who we can be, or rather who He knows we will be, when we are in Him surrendered to His control over our lives.

For example, He has told me that He sees me as this 12 foot tall gladiator. He has told Kristine that He sees her as this lovely doe that gracefully leaps about, a doe that has now grown horns and is ready for battle. He has told Aubrea and Ashley that they are like these precious little girls that He has made to play with Him and to enjoy Him. I know He has shown others of you how He sees you and it is so cool. If you don't know yet how He sees you, ask Him to show you. I am sure He will be delighted to give you a sneak preview of who He is making you into.

Now Gideon is in a bit of a cantankerous mood and he blows by this whole "hero" comment and goes straight for the cynicism. He replied:

### ***Judges 6:13***

..."if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say, 'The Lord brought us up out of Egypt'? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites."

If you ask me, that response was a bit nasty; after all he was talking to the Angel of the Lord. Did you notice that Gideon did what most of us do and that is project all our stuff on to God and make all the troubles in our life His issue and not ours? Gideon did not say anything about the fact that the nation had abandoned God and turned to worship the so called "god's" of the Amorites; he just blames the Lord for "abandoning" them.

It seems that we have all started from the place thinking that God does not work for me. He may work for others (in this case Gideon's points back to his ancestors) but not for me. Yet, like Gideon, we rarely take an honest look inside to consider how we simply have not trusted ourselves to the Lord. We just want Him to bring His goodness into our lives and behave towards us like we think a God should behave and just constantly bless us.

But we don't stop to consider that a relationship with God, just like any relationship, requires mutuality and that the Lord promises that if you draw near to Him He will draw near to you. But it is not a one-way street where we get to act as if God should do His part and we get to do whatever it is that we want to do. It is a relationship between persons and it requires us to do our part—which is to come to Him.

Then in the same way that Gideon ignored the "hero" comment, it seems that God blows right by Gideon's audacious remarks and He says: "Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you" (***Judges 6:14***)!

The Lord knows that Gideon was just emoting, and He gives him room for that, so He does not correct everything Gideon said, but He does go straight for Gideon's attitude. Gideon is mad at God. Gideon thinks God has not done his job. So God turns to him and essentially says: if you are so wise and full of wisdom and understand this situation so thoroughly, then go in your own strength and rescue Israel. You be their God!

It's as if the Lord wanted to draw out from Gideon the understanding that God is God and he is not; therefore, he is not really in a place to hold onto his anger

toward God because his understanding of the situation is limited and incomplete. God does not directly rebuke him for his anger, but at the same time He wants Gideon to know that his anger is misplaced.

I know that many of you have been, and some of you still are, angry at God for what He has allowed in your life. And, like Gideon, you have been very forthright with your feelings and attitudes toward God. But it is misplaced and your understanding of your own situation is limited and incomplete.

You can hardly understand the generational sin that has been passed down to you and its power and grip over your life. You can hardly understand the darkness and depravity of your own heart. You can hardly understand the depth of idolatry to which you have sunk in worship of the "ME." Believe me; you are not very objective when it comes to the issue of you and what God has allowed in your life.

But in the same way that God raised up the Midianites to be a tool to turn the nation of Israel back to Him, He has raised up many tools in your life to ensure that you turn to Him and let Him be your God. Left to yourself, you would have continued in your hardened rebellion to the Lord and never truly experienced or known His love, His peace, His grace, or His mercy.

From the perspective of God and you, those "Midianites" that have been in your life are probably one of the greatest gifts God has given to you. I know it is hard to see it that way, but you have to start seeing with your spiritual eyes of faith and not your eyes of the flesh.

Now the Lord's strategy for engaging Gideon worked. Gideon replied: "But Lord," ... "how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family" (**Judges 6:15**)!

Finally, Gideon is starting to get grounded in reality. God is God and he is not; he is weak and has no strength and the problem is not with God but with his own heart. In grace and mercy "The Lord said to him, "I will be with you. And you will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man" (*Judges 6:16*).

Now that sounds a lot better doesn't it. Remember, the numbers of the Midianites, and those from the east, were as thick as locusts—too numerous to count. But with the Lord they will be as nothing. We are to never calculate the odds of a battle for when it comes to the power of the Lord nothing compares.

I believe God is always working to get us to understand this truth. He wants us to start from the platform of humility and be thoroughly convinced that apart from Him we can do nothing; yet, on the flip side, He wants us to be thoroughly convinced that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (*Philippians 4:13*).

If we even hope, for a moment in time, to get rid of the Midianites in our land, He must go before us. The battles in our soul that seem so difficult and scary are impossible for us to win; at least when we look at them through the lens of our own strength. But from the perspective of the Lord going before us to clear out the land, they are as nothing. Regardless of how many issues we have, they will all fall as if we are up against only one enemy.

Now Gideon was able to grasp his weakness and inability, but he was not too convinced yet that God was actually going to work for him. He appreciated the good words and all, but he needed some proof. Gideon was not about to climb out of his hole and face the Midianites without a little more proof than just a



promise; he wanted a sign proving that the Lord would help him and that it was the Lord who was actually speaking (*Judges 6:17*).

This is so us. I love this man. If you think of where each of you started on this journey of faith and how far you have come, everyone of us should be so willing to give ourselves to the Lord. But still it seems that with each new door that needs to be opened, and with each new wound that must be addressed within our soul, we act as if God must prove Himself all over again. When He talks to us we act as if we have never before heard His voice and we demand a sign before we go forward or before we are willing to believe. We are so silly.

Gideon asked the Lord to stay there and he would run and prepare an offering for the Lord, presumably giving the Angel of the Lord time to concoct some sort of proof. Before long Gideon returns with some meat, unleavened bread, and a pot of broth. The Angel of the Lord tells him to put the meat and the bread on a rock and pour the broth on top of it (*Judges 6:18-20*).

The rock provided the perfect altar, as in the Law it proscribes that an altar of the Lord was to be of un-hewn rock. Then we have the sacrifice (the flesh) the unleavened bread and the libations poured out before the Lord, which, by the way, also served to make the miracle more impressive.

### ***Judges 6:21***

Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and bread with the tip of the staff in his hand, and fire flamed up from the rock and consumed all he had brought. And the angel of the LORD disappeared.

Whoa. That is so cool. However, surprisingly, Gideon absolutely flipped out. He cried out: "Oh, Sovereign LORD, I'm doomed! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face" (**Judges 6:22**).

Again; this is so typical us. What do we all tend to do, one way or another, in almost every situation? We make everything about the "ME." Instead of falling down in worship and relishing the fact that the Lord was so gracious and merciful to answer his doubts and provide the proof he was looking for, he is inward focused and self-obsessed. What he says does not even make sense. Clearly the Lord came down to talk with him and clearly he did not die, so why is he now making such a fuss. I think the point is that until we start living out our faith, we are all completely ridiculous.

The Lord then speaks to Gideon and tells him to not be afraid and assures him that he will not die. Then, and only then, did Gideon worship the Lord. He built an altar and named it Yahweh-Shalom (the Lord is peace) (**Judges 6:23-24**).

Then that night the Lord spoke to Gideon and told him to take the second of his father's bulls and use it to pull down his father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole standing beside it. Yes, Gideon's dad was one of the very reasons the Lord brought the Midianites to judge the people. It's funny that Gideon never made mention of that little issue when he was kvetching to the Lord and blaming God for all their troubles. God told Gideon to build an altar of stone and sacrifice the bull on the altar using the wood from the Asherah pole (**Judges 6:25-26**).

Now, I know that each of you are sitting on the edge of your seat ready to raise your hands because you instantly saw the typology in this request and you can see Jesus written all over it. The use of the second bull brings to mind what we

studied about the “firstborn” and how the youngest supplants the eldest and takes the position of the firstborn in the same way that Isaac supplanted Ishmael, Jacob supplanted Esau, Ephraim supplanted Manasseh, and Jesus supplanted Adam and became the firstborn.

Secondly, the bull, like Jesus, destroys all “gods” who are not really gods at all and are only good to be used as fire wood. And, then of course, there is the sacrifice which covers the sins of the people for having abandoned their God (even though, as we will find out, they don’t want the covering).

Oh and we can’t miss out on the fact that the bull was 7-years old. This indicates that the judgment of Israel by Midian has been completed and it has run its perfect course and it is now time for deliverance. The judgment has fulfilled its purposes and the people have once again cried out to the Lord for help.

Gideon took a big step of faith, **his first**, and did as the Lord asked, but still he did it at night because he was deathly afraid of the people, and for good reason. When they found out what he had done they wanted to kill him (***Judges 6:27***). Surprisingly, even though it was his dad’s altar, idol, and bull, Gideon’s dad actually stepped up to the plate.

### ***Judges 6:31-32***

But Joash [Gideon’s dad] said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down." Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he broke down his altar.

So Gideon, having survived seeing the face of the Angel of the Lord and the fierce reaction of the town's people, is ready for this whole thing to be ramped up to the next level where his faith will be matured to that of "mighty hero."

The Midianites, the Amalekites and the tribes from the east all cross over the Jordan and are in the Jezreel valley which we know as the valley of Megiddo, the staging place for the last great battle of the nations; the war of Armageddon. So in many ways, the rest of this story provides for us a prophetic picture of what will happen at the very end of the famed 7-year tribulation. Check out ***Revelation 19***.

### ***Judges 6:34-35***

Then the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon. He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms, and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him. He also sent messengers throughout Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, summoning their warriors, and all of them responded.

What a beautiful reality; God will always get the work done through us if we are willing. In this instance, the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon; and, in the same way, the Spirit of the Lord who dwells within you will empower you to wage the necessary war against the enemies in your soul. You don't have to worry for you will not be left hanging to try and do it on your own. You are weak, but He is strong and He is faithful to be both your strength and your victory.

So I want you to try and get a grasp of the situation. The Spirit comes over Gideon and he instantly summons everyone to war and lo and behold they actually show up. Now what? What was he thinking? I am sure that he was not really expecting that to happen. So he starts to panic a bit and once again asks the Lord to prove Himself.

It does not matter that the Angel of the Lord had already personally appeared to him, performed a miracle, and consumed his offering with fire; it does not matter that the Angel of the Lord then disappeared right in front of his face; it does not matter that the Lord had been frequently talking to him; it does not matter that the Lord delivered him from the town's people; it does not matter that the Spirit took possession of him; and it does not matter that all the people responded and were ready to fight; he needed more proof.

Sound familiar? This mighty hero does not seem so mighty right now. I cannot tell you how many times I have asked the Lord to prove to me and re-confirm the promises He has made me. For a while there, I must have asked Him about a gazillion times to prove that I heard His voice, that I was not making it all up in my head, that others were not just saying things to help cheer me up, and that He would do as He said. It was ridiculous; I drove myself crazy. Sadly, it took me many years before I was able to settle and rest believing the Lord.

***Judges 6:36-38***

Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the

ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised." And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water.

Now, I just want to clarify, this was not an act of faith; this was an act of fear followed by God's mercy. So don't walk out of here thinking that it is a good thing to "lay out a fleece" as many Christians tend to do. It is not. This is **not** an example to follow but one to learn from. This is not how we are to find out about the will of the Lord for our lives. Do you got that? Mark it down and never forget it!

It does not matter that all the people are waiting for instructions from Gideon; this is not how things are to be done. In the same way, it will not matter who is waiting on you for a decision; that is not how things are to be done. I want you to refer to **Proverbs 2** and **3**, and the "How God Speaks" series on our website, for instruction on how the will of the Lord for our lives is to be discovered.

Not surprisingly, despite God's graciousness in answering Gideon's request, it still was not enough. This obvious miracle just did not do it for the man; he wanted more.

### ***Judges 6:39-40***

Then Gideon said to God, "Let not your anger burn against me; let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew." And God

did so that night; and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew.

Now after that prior word of exhortation regarding discovering the will of the Lord for our lives, I have an interesting thought for you. What if Gideon's actions in asking the Lord for a sign were actually directed by the Holy Spirit to make a very important point for you and for me? What if Gideon's fearful response was necessary to draw out from him any reticence that existed deep in his soul? At the same time, what if it was all prophetic?

We have learned that whatever is not of faith is sin and it is clear that Gideon's actions were not even close to deriving from faith; but we also know that a sacrifice had already been made for the sins of the people. So, as is true in our lives, the sacrifice has been made; thus, the Lord is not afraid of our sin, but often uses our very weaknesses to accomplish His purposes and show us His power, majesty, and faithfulness.

In this instance, the water and fleece might just possibly paint a prophetic picture with regard to the nation of Israel, Christ coming to the Jews, their rejection of the gospel, and the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentile nations. I believe that God used Gideon's foolishness to bring us some powerful prophetic typology.

With regard to the first miracle, it is possible that the fleece represents the nation of Israel who is spiritually dry. But the Lord brings the living water (or the Spirit) to the nation of Israel, while at the same time leaving the Gentile nations dry.

We know that Jesus said he came to lost sons of Israel and not for the Gentile nations. He instructed his disciples to go out only to the Jewish people and specifically told them not to go to the Gentiles (**Matthew 10:5-6**). Jesus even told a Canaanite woman who sought him out to heal her daughter: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (**Matthew 15:22-24**). So the first step was to bring living water (or the Spirit of God) to the nation of Israel.

In **John 4:10-14** Jesus said that He is the source of living water and that whoever drinks of that water it will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Then in **John 7:38** he said that all who believe in Him, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water, which was a reference to the Spirit of God. Jesus also said that He came to bring this life in abundance (**John 10:10**); in other words, our bowl would be full.

But since the Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, the fleece once again became dry and the ground became wet, symbolic of the gospel and the Spirit of God going out to all the Gentile nations and their receiving life. In response to the faith of a Roman officer Jesus said:

**Matthew 8:10-12**

"I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel! And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."



Pretty cool typology. But again, this whole fleece incidence is not something for us to follow; for it represents the faithlessness of not only Gideon but the entire Jewish nation.

Now God puts His very specific handprint on what would be an undeniable miracle. Gideon gathered together everyone who had showed up for war (32,000 in all), but God told him that he had far too many people. So Gideon said: “whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home” and 22,000 of his warriors left leaving less than a third. The Lord then told Gideon that the 10,000 remaining were still too many (keep in mind that the enemy was gathered in hordes; numbers too big to count).

So the Lord instructed Gideon to have his men go to the water and drink. He said that those who would kneel down and drink with their mouths in the stream can go home and those who scoop up the water with their hands and lap it like a dog can stay and fight. And out of the 10,000 only 300 (approximately .009 of the original number) lapped their water and so the rest went home.

So Gideon gathered the rams horns and provisions from the warriors who had kneeled and sent them all away. God said: “With these 300 men I will give you the victory over the Midianites.” (***Judges 7:1-8***). And, by the way, I have no idea why God used the lapping of the water as His measuring rod. It’s kind of a weird God thing. I have yet to hear a decent explanation.

The Lord knew that Gideon would be frightened by the numbers (which is entirely understandable) so He sent him on a reconnaissance mission to the Midianite camp. That night God had given one of the Midianites a dream and

Gideon had snuck up on him right as he was telling his friend about it. It was a funky dream but his friend said that the dream can only mean one thing: “God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies” (**Judges 7:8-14**).

Gideon was pumped; his faith was maxed out. He bowed and worshiped the Lord and then went back to his camp and shouted: “Get up! For the Lord has given you victory over the Midianite hordes” (**Judges 7:15**)! He divided his men so they could surround the camp and told them to get their horns and torches and cover the torches by a clay pot so the enemy does not see them coming, and on his mark to all blow their horns and shout: “For the Lord and for Gideon.”

It was just after midnight when they had surrounded the Midianites but when it came time for shouting they actually said: “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” Get this; it is so much like the miracle at Jericho. Each man just stood in his place—that is it, they only stood—and God created such a panic in the camp from the blast of the horns and the shout of the people that the Midianites and the allies started killing each other and those who were not killed fled. You can picture all the hosts of the Lord’s armies shouting out with the Israelites like they did before at Jericho. No wonder the Midianites freaked.

Then only after this “crashing of the walls” so to speak, and the slaughtering of masses, Gideon and his men pursued the remnant, hunted them down and killed them all. It was no big deal, as if they were only fighting one man (just as the Lord promised). (**Judges 7:16-25**).

Then after this great victory we find out that Gideon’s faith had matured to a level unsurpassed by few. He completely trusted the Lord and wanted nothing

more than for the people of Israel to also trust the Lord. They all came to Gideon and asked him to rule over them but he just said:

### ***Judges 8:23***

I will not rule over you, nor will my son. The Lord will rule over you!

The theocracy was once again reestablished and for the remainder of Gideon's life, about 40 years, there was peace in the land.

What a phenomenal story of fear and faith which just highlights God's mercy and the way He always accomplishes His will in and through our lives despite our weaknesses, our failures, and even our sin.

Let this story give you comfort. Let this story give you confidence in the Lord. Let this story give you strength to know that you can go all the way with the Lord and you can conquer all the enemies in your land regardless of their numbers.

He will go before you and it will be as if you are conquering just one man. It does not matter how deep the wound goes, it does not matter how many wounds you have, and it does not matter if you are now furious at God. Let it go and He will bring you peace. Do the work, go to war, and you will have victory. You just have to be willing to go. **Let the Lord rule over you!** Remember, the Lord is Peace and He wants you to know His peace every day of your life!

Let's Pray.