

Judges 08-03-14b

Let's resume our study in Judges chapter 6. The angel of the Lord is speaking to Gideon. And this is a result of the oppression that the people of Israel are experiencing and have experienced for the better part of a decade. If you want a modern time reference, if you think back, you remember when we had all of the big Millennium Scare and the year 2000 was going to roll over and we had all these Y2K issues.

Everybody knew what Y2K meant. Well, that was about this length of time ago, just a little over seven years ago. And so the Midianites, as I mentioned, have a long and rather colorful history.

The only bright spot at all was when Moses lived with the Midianite priest for 40 years. He was sort of the best the Midianites had to offer, I guess. And of course, that winds up playing into the Levite family line in the sense that Moses married a Midianite woman, but we don't end up with any significant clans or offspring to speak of in that line.

But I mentioned Balaam and the infiltration scheme that he suggested to the Midianites and the Moabites. And you think, Balaam, you rascal, you're a prophet. You've just been, God had you pronounce four different words of blessing on the Israelites, and now you've gone and sort of suggested the key to their downfall and had them insinuate these women in there for the purpose of seduction and trying to rot their morals and disintegrate their moral fabric.

And so the Midianites, not only did the Israelites suffer first in Numbers 24, where you had that huge number of people that were slain and perished, but 1,000 warriors from each tribe under Phineas went forth against them, and that was the harassment that God commanded Moses. But ultimately, we saw in Joshua chapter 13 that the Midianites were destroyed. In Joshua 13, 21, the cities of the plain, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, in Heshbon, Moses smote with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Recham, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba were the princes or the rulers of Sihon dwelling in the country.

Balaam, the son of Baor, the soothsayer, the children of Israel, slew with the sword among them that were slain by them. And because Balaam threw his lot in with the Midianites, he died with the Midianites. So this is going to be a final judgment with Gideon on the Midianites, and they will not be heard of in the Bible or secular history again.

This is the last gasp of the Midianites right here. So the angel of the Lord has appeared. He has come under the, as it says, the oak tree or the terebinth tree, and we've gotten a little bit of family background here.

Joash, the Abie Ezrite, is the owner of this area. Gideon is his son, and Gideon is threshing wheat in the winepress. If you've ever seen pictures of winepresses, they are shaded, they're covered.

Their olive presses and winepresses are often even in caves because you don't want your hot

Mediterranean sun turning all your grapes to raisins and drying out your olives before you get a chance to press the oil out of them. So presses were generally in either caves or in man-made structures. Doesn't tell us which one here, but you know what goes on when you're threshing.

The whole idea is, you remember the threshing floor of Arana up on the overlook of Jerusalem where the angel of the Lord stopped the plague. David's up there and he buys the threshing floor, and that's where the temple is ultimately going to be sited. Why do they have it up there? Threshing floor, you want a wide open flat place, hard packed ground or some sort of a floor so that when you take your winnowing fan and you get a big scoop of wheat and you toss it in the air, the air is blowing freely and it carries the chaff away.

You're like chaff in the wind. You know, the chaff is going to blow to the side. It can pile up like snow drifts if you thresh an awful lot of wheat and they'll eventually burn the chaff, but the wheat gets gathered into the barn.

So you need an open place where there's a good breeze so that the chaff will be carried away and the good parts of the grain will fall back to the earth to be gathered up, ground up and so on. Well, if you're threshing indoors, what's that going to be like? You get your winnowing fan and you toss the stuff in the air. The grain falls to the ground and the chaff is just hanging, sticking to your sweaty skin, going down the back of your robe, up your sleeves.

This is worse than dealing with fiberglass insulation. You've got this hairy, sticky wheat chaff and it's in your face and he probably has a rag over his face to try to filter the stuff out. And he's in there threshing, trying to keep his grain from being stolen by the Midianites.

And you know he's just cursing under his breath the whole time saying, you know, why am I having to do this Midianite problem? Why has God made us all these great promises? Well, this is really great. Here I am in the land flowing with milk and honey. I'm in a dark place with my winnowing fan throwing all this chaff around.

I can't even see the wheat for the chaff. What kind of a life is this? What kind of a task is this? And he's just frustrated out of his mind. And this is the moment.

Now the angel of the Lord knows his business. He's not a, there are no dummies in the ranks of the angels that God sends out on these tasks. Now, if I was writing this story, if you were thinking up this story, we would probably say, and lo Gideon lay on the ground in the cool of the evening, staring up at the stars in the sky.

And behold, suddenly an angel appeared and light shone about and hail to the old son of Joash. And then there was with the angel a multitude of the heaven. It would have been a grand scene.

He could have come early in the morning when Gideon was having breakfast. He hadn't gone out and done his threshing yet. Could have come in the evening after Gideon washed up and got all the sticky stuff off and came back home and was maybe beginning to eat a meal or just

finished his meal and was going to go outside and have a last cup of coffee for the day or something.

But what is the precise moment that the angel selects to give Gideon this news? And the angel has been there. The angel has been sitting in the shade of the tree. The angel doesn't have anything to fear from Midianites.

So he's sitting there, cool breeze under the oak tree. And he sees this chaff coming out the windows and the door of this winepress thing. And you can hear these mumbled Hebrew curses coming out the window.

And the angel just sits there for a while savoring the beauty of the scene before he walks up and appears to Gideon. And see, I think angels have a sense of humor because God has a sense of humor and we have a sense of humor. We're made in God's image.

And I think the angel probably had to compose himself and get that angel of the Lord face on before he went in to try to deliver this with some sense of dignity, because Gideon is really a comical figure. And he's presented that way in the passage. So he's threatening.

I mean, we don't lose it because we don't know what a winepress looks like and we don't know how threshing is. But anybody in the ancient world reading this story would already be laughing. Gideon's threshing in a winepress.

I mean, this I can't think of as a suitable example of this. But it's a really kind of a ridiculous scene. So the angel of the Lord puts on his game face.

He comes in and composes himself. He comes in and he says, the Lord is with you. Mighty man of valor.

As he's standing there with his wheat stuck all over him and these and his red face and his sweat dripping off of him. And he's just cursing and he's standing there in this big cloud of chaff and the Lord is with you. Mighty man.

I mean, it's just the most incongruous message with this scene. So Gideon says, Oh, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And you can imagine gesturing to himself. Why has all this happened to us? I am like the nation.

I'm all chaff and no wheat. I'm all stuffy and no cool breeze. Where is that great prosperity? Where are the miracles which our fathers told us about saying did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? The Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

This is a partial truth, isn't it? It's true as far as it goes. God has forsaken them. God has delivered them into the hands of the Midianites.

But to ask why is to betray a serious lack of paying attention to the prophet who came in advance. So then it says, The Lord turned to him and as is so often the case, the Lord and the

angel of the Lord are interchangeable. The angel of the Lord is like the telephone.

He's just like a loudspeaker. God is speaking through the angel and so he can be referred to either way. Turned to him and said, Go in this might of yours.

He gestures to himself and says, How has all this happened to us? And the angel says, Go in this might of yours. Go in this strength of yours. Oh, mighty man with the fan.

Oh, while I laugh at the chaff, you're the man with the fan. Go in this might of yours. You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have I not sent you? And there's a great irony there because Gideon recognizes that God has put Israel in this position. If he knows this history, he knows that at points where Israel cries out to God, God delivers and God sends a deliverer. God promised that he would drive the nations out from before them.

So the Lord says, Okay, go. I'm sending you. I have commissioned you.

You are going to be the deliverer. Well, this scene right here, this frame of the movie right here shows the problem in Israel because when God speaks, people don't believe him. Moses had a crisis of faith at Sinai.

Go speak to Pharaoh, Lord. I'm slow of speech. Go, I'll be with you.

Well, but Lord... You know, this crisis of faith at the moment of commissioning is not uncommon. Go in this might of yours. You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have I not sent you? Now notice, how many encyclopedias are there in Israel that you could look maybe in the evening browsing through the encyclopedia and you go to the M's for the angel of the Lord because it's Malak, remember? And there's a picture there that shows you what the angel of the Lord is. So you say, well, see, here's what the angel of the Lord looks like when I see him. Then I'll know that that's a message from God.

Does Gideon say, who out there? Who goes there? Who art thou? You got an ID card? You got any form of identification? Can you do something? Isn't it interesting that when Abraham looks out the tent flap and sees the three men coming, he knows it's God. When Gideon sees this individual, he knows it's the angel of the Lord. He calls him, oh my Lord.

And he asks him a question that God would answer. The Lord said, go in this might of yours. You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have I not sent you? And this assumes and implies that Gideon knows the source of this commission. Knows who's talking. If this was just some stranger and Gideon was just passing the time of day, he would say, who are you? Where are you from? Why do you speak this way? But he doesn't argue with the fact that he has been sent or that this is a divine commission.

He recognizes the messenger. How did he do that? How did he know? Because they don't have encyclopedias. They don't have posters.

They don't have images. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. There are no portraits.

There are no pictures. Cherubim have been woven into the curtains of the tabernacle. Nobody's seen that thing in decades.

How does he know? Well, I could ask you the same question. How do you know when you're hearing the truth of the Word of God? How do you know when a principle or a promise or a doctrine fits a situation and you apply it? How do you know that God is impressing on you by various means that a certain decision needs to be made, that a certain course of action needs to be taken? How do you know? Some of us knew when we met our future spouse. There was a point at which we knew.

There was a point at which we knew that we were going to go get a particular kind of education or live in a particular place or do a particular thing. We're trying to live our life to please the Lord. And we come to a conviction.

We come to a settled knowledge that this is the right thing. And if you try to explain it to someone else, well, but how did you know? I want to be able to know like you knew. I've known several people who the first time they met their future spouse, they said, I'm going to marry that girl.

I'm going to marry that guy. And it just hit them like a bolt of lightning. That's who I'm going to marry.

And some of the rest of us had a pretty strong idea that wow, this is completely unique in my experience of the opposite gender. And you've barely exchanged words, but you just suddenly know. How do you know? Here's the point.

Here's the principle from this particular section of the passage. Gideon is evidently the most or one of the most faith-filled men in Israel. He doesn't have a lot and he's not by any means the sharpest knife in the drawer when it comes to Old Testament saints.

But in Israel, in his generation, he's ahead of the pack. He at least recognizes that God has done this and that it is God who has to deliver them. That's why God chose him.

Same reason God chose David. Same reason God chose all the people that he chooses. Mary and Joseph to be the parents of the Lord and his humanity.

God chooses people for a reason because they are people of faith. God cannot work with faithless people. God does not work through faithless people to deliver.

He has to work around them or in spite of them. So Gideon, and one of the marks of his faith is

he knows a messenger of the Lord when he sees him. He just knows.

Doesn't have to ask. Doesn't require a demonstration. Doesn't need a second or third witness.

And this is true for you and me. If we are truly seeking God's will, if we are walking that narrow road, staying in the light, Jesus said you will know the truth. You will recognize the truth.

You will be able to identify the truth and all of the things that thereunto pertain. God's will for life, God's will in circumstances, God's will in situations, God's will in relationships, we will know. We will have guidance in the light of God's Word.

Thy Word is a lamp to my feet. It is a light to my path. Feet walking the path, this is the metaphor that speaks of human life.

You take one day at a time, one step at a time. You go in a certain direction. You have to make a decision when the road forks.

You know, if there's a fork in the road, generally you have to make a choice. How do you know? Thy Word is a lamp. Thy Word is a light.

So, he recognizes that this is a message from God. He doesn't have to ask. We should be able to do the same thing.

Go in this might of yours. Now, what might is he talking about? Well, it takes strength to thresh wheat. The only thing we know about Gideon physically is he is able to thresh wheat and he is doing it by himself.

There's no mention of any servants. There's no mention of any brothers. And this appearance seems to be personal.

It's a two-way conversation between himself and the angel of the Lord. So, he is out there with some unknown quantity of wheat and he's threshing it himself. Now, if he's threshing it himself, where did the wheat come from? Evidently, he planted it himself.

He cultivated it himself. He harvested it himself. He hauled it to the winepress himself and he is now threshing the wheat himself.

It's the only conclusion we can draw. Nobody else has been mentioned. The Father is nowhere in view.

And the angel says, Go in this strength. Go in this might of yours. Well, the only might that we see is the physical strength.

And in Hebrew, it's a very strong word. In fact, I think they've imitated this, those of you that are aficionados of Klingon. You know, they've got a made-up language for the Klingons and it's supposed to be a very robust and forceful masculine type of language.

Well, they've ripped off a lot of their sounds and their terms from Hebrew. And one of the ones that they have taken is this word because the word here for strength is *chuk*. And you can't say it without saying it strongly.

You can't say *chuk*. I mean, it just, it doesn't work. It's not the word.

The word is strong. It's got that, you know, they've got a name for these sounds, consonantal sounds that are formed in the back of your throat. And it's *chuk*.

You can practically clear your throat saying that word. And it's the word for strength. And it's not just a word like, wow, he's strong or isn't he mighty.

This is *chuk*. It's an instantaneous burst of demonstrated strength. That's what it talks about.

This is what you do when you're winnowing. You can stand around and fan yourself and complain and curse and so on. But sooner or later, you got to dig in this.

And when it says winnowing fan, it sounds like some kind of a little Chinese thing that you would wave in your face. The winnowing fan is basically a giant flat shovel. Now, I don't know if you've ever messed with wheat or oats or any kind of grain, but anybody that's been around horses and had to feed horses, oats and grains are heavy.

Those big, we used to get 100-pound burlap sacks of oats, rolled oats, and sweet feed. And that stuff is heavy. You take a big, wide, long-handled flat shovel, stick it into this wheat, and you've got to throw it up in the air and dig down and throw it up in the air.

And you do this over and over. And each time you do it, it's *chuk*, *chuk*, *chuk*. And what are you doing? You're getting the chaff out from the wheat.

What does the angel say? This is the kind of strength that you're going to use to deliver Israel. You're going to get this chaff of the Midianites out from the wheat of God's people. This is the might, this is the strength.

You are going to do this task in the realm of human existence, in the realm of military force. You're going to get the useless chaff out. This might, this strength, this *chuk* is what you're going to use to accomplish God's deliverance.

That's why the demonstrative is there. This might, this strength. And it's, in Hebrew, the full phrase here is *b'chukah zeh*, *b'chukah zeh*.

And *b'* is the preposition in, by, or with. *Chuk* is strength, *kah* is your. So *b'chukah zeh*, this strength.

It's very emphatic in Hebrew. You don't often see the demonstrative pronoun. They don't use it much.

And when they do, it's always very emphatic. He says, you're going to go in this strength. He says, how did this happen to Israel? And he's standing there with his stuff all over.

The angel says, that's the strength you're going to use to deliver the people. You think that this is mindless and hopeless and silly and you're railing and cursing. And how did this happen? This is the strength, your strength in persisting, your strength in finding a way to accomplish the objective in these dire circumstances, these adverse situations.

This is the strength you're going to use. There's a powerful picture here that the sometimes mindless and meaningless and grinding trials that we go through that just seems senseless and it frustrates us and it angers us and it sometimes embitters us. And we tend to look up at God and say, how did you let this happen? I thought I was supposed to be blessed.

I've studied your word. I've been a Christian a long time. I'm one of the good guys.

Why am I suffering in this way? God says, this is the strength I'm building in you that you're going to use for a great thing. Gideon has had to be creative. He's figured out a way.

A lot of people in Israel just said, well, it's pretty nice. We're just going to have to starve. We're just going to have to eat weeds and try to steal from one another and do something so that we can stay alive.

Got to feed my family. Don't know what we're going to do. Have to hawk the jewelry and talk to a caravan of passing tradesmen or craftsmen or whatever and see if we can barter, see if we can get something for food.

Gideon says, look, I'm going to plant my own food. I'm going to grow my own food. I'm going to harvest my food.

I'm going to bring it in and I will find a way to thresh it. I will find a way to grind it. I will find a way to bake it.

I will find a way to feed my family under these circumstances. And it takes strength. It takes perseverance.

Now, he's not happy. And as it's common in the military and in the Marine Corps to say, every Marine's got a right to complain, but he's getting it done. And the angel says, this is why God has chosen you, Gideon.

It's this strength that you're going to use. Go in this strength. You shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Have I not sent you? The only fact you need is I have prepared you and now I am sending you. Have I not sent? What more do you need? God is commissioning you. The angel of the Lord is standing here talking to you.

What do you want by way of guarantee that this is going to work out well? Has God ever come down and sent an angel and commissioned somebody and they just got slaughtered, died in place, utterly failed? Anybody that responds to God's call and marches forward in faith is victorious. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Nobody with faith gets defeated. Nobody with faith is conquered because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Have I not sent you? And Gideon says, yes, sir, three bags full.

Which way to the Midianites? And marched out and led the army to a great victory. Now he's got the Moses complex. Oh my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house.

Here is your summary of subjectivity. I have bad genes. I have inherited problems.

I am by birth debilitated. I am by birth handicapped. I am by birth shot down before I start because my clan is the weakest in Manasseh.

If you were going to rank the tribes in Israel by order of authority, who's up at the top? Used to be Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, but then Judah got the rulership. So Judah goes up to the top. So you've got Judah up there.

You've got Levi up there. Reuben still floating around near the top for general purposes. You work your way down through.

Who is the number 13 tribe in Israel? Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Who's the firstborn? Manasseh, but Jacob crossed his hands. What bad luck that was for everybody in the tribe of Manasseh.

Well, we should have been, we could have been, we would have been, but grandpa crossed his hands and we're not. It's out of our control. It's not my fault.

Daughtering old grandpa, who knew what was in his mind? He crossed his hands and big deal us out of our birthright. And so now we're tribe number 13. Even Benjamin is higher than us because we're just a half tribe.

You know, full tribe outranks a half tribe. We're just a half, you know, they're actually like a quarter tribe because they're the second of two half tribes. So he says, look, I'm at, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh.

Did you hear me? Manasseh, lowest tribe in Israel. I'm the weakest clan in the lowest tribe. All of the, I was born into problems.

It's not my fault. And I am the least in my father's house. Now think about it.

This is the most faithful man in Israel. This is going to be the great hero of the victory. And this

is the level of his thinking.

It tells you the extent to which Israel has fallen. What happened to the Caleb's and the Joshua's and the Othniel's, the Shamgar's, even the Ehud's had enough gumption. God didn't have to send him an angel.

He got busy. He made himself a sword. He went in there and got after it.

Turned around at the idols and went in there and got himself a fat king. Now, the most full of faith man in Israel, well, but you know, I've got this and that and the other. I've got problems.

I've got issues. You know, when I was born, my clan, nobody's going to rally to my, I can't raise any people. I have no influence.

I'm not gifted. I have no, yibbidy yibbidy yibbidy yibbidy. We do this all the time.

We just talk and talk. We make excuses. What did God say? And again, you get the answer before you get the question.

The prophet says, look, here's why you're in this situation. And then Gideon is saying, why are we in this situation? Now God has said, go in strength. Have I not sent you? And Gideon says, well, I have no strength.

You know, I can't go because I'm not. God just got through saying, you've got might and I'm sending you. What do you want? And once again, it's like Gideon is just not really, you want to, if Moses was slow of speech and of a slow tongue, Gideon is slow of ear and of a slow brain.

He just doesn't digest. He doesn't take God's word at value. But of course we can't throw rocks at Gideon because we do the very same thing.

God makes a promise and we don't believe him. God issues a commission. God gives a call.

Where are all the great promises? Those who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's son so that he can be the firstborn among many brethren. Those who are sanctified and justified and glorified. Who are those people in Romans 8? What is the single qualification to stand in that honored group? To love God, to be the called according to his purpose.

If you're called, it's a call. Go, have I not sent you? What are you waiting on? Why are you still standing here? But it reminds me of the point that Patty made on the break. When you think about Simon Peter, Jesus comes walking on the water.

The stormy seas and everybody's afraid and everybody's in fear. And you know the stormy water, you know what that stands for. The wicked are like the troubled sea.

The sea ever and always, the untamed waves speak of evil. Jesus is calmly walking, unperturbed, undisturbed, unflappable, unconcerned about this great stormy sea in which

these seasoned, all their life on the Sea of Galilee disciples are fearful of their lives. Jesus is just out for a stroll.

And he would have passed them by, but there's a conversation there. He says, calm yourselves, it's me. Peter says, if it's really you, bid me come to you.

Jesus says, come on. So Peter, great, great man of faith, steps out of the boat that he was afraid was going to sink and kill him just seconds earlier. It's extraordinary.

You have to admire Peter. People that bash Peter just don't think about the scriptures. This is a death-threatening situation.

And Peter steps out of the only thing keeping him afloat, steps out onto the stormy sea. He's got his eyes fixed on Jesus. Jesus says, come on.

And Peter does it. You want to talk about responding to the call. You want to talk about someone who loves the Lord Jesus and wants to go to Him.

He didn't say, Lord, if it's you, come get in the boat. That's what I would say. Lord, if that's really you, come get in this boat.

Then we'll have the boat and you and surely we won't sink then. What is Peter thinking? Lord, if it's you, bid me walk out there where you are. Listen, this is a man of faith.

He is a man of tremendous spiritual strength. I would never in a million years, I don't care, I could live to the end of the millennium studying every day and I would never see Jesus on stormy water and say, Lord, let me walk out there where you are. I would be saying, Lord, can you and as many angels as you can fit, come and get in this boat, please, now.

And bring life preservers and sandwiches and whatever else. Peter, it's inexplicable to me. Lord, if that's you, I want to walk out there where you are.

It's the most impressive thing I can think of. And Peter does that. And he's got his eyes fixed on the Lord.

He loves the Lord. And he is called according to his purpose. And out he steps and out he walks.

And he does the same thing as the Lord Jesus. He's on top of the water. He is undisturbed, unperturbed by the evil, that representation of evil and sin, until what? He takes his eyes off the Lord.

As soon as he begins to get distracted by what is immediate, wow. People die in this kind of storm in boats. And you remember very well, he starts to sink.

And he hollers to the Lord. And Jesus grabs him and pulls him up. But when we were talking about this on the break, I reminded Patty that, you know, Peter is the only guy outside of the

Lord Jesus to walk on top of the water.

Who is the guy that went so defeated that he was all the way down at the bottom of the water and at the gates of Sheol? Jonah, go to Nineveh. Jonah said, I ain't going. I'm going the other way.

Disobeyed the Lord, took his ship and sailed away. And the sailors throw him overboard in that great storm, very similar to this storm that Peter is in. And Jonah sinks like a stone.

Negative buoyancy, doesn't matter if he ever swam before. He sinks like a rock. He goes to the very bottom of the sea.

He says, seaweed. I get stuff tangled in my mind because we have a little saying, you know, seaweed and barnacles are my clothes. The hair on my head is hemp and every bone in my body is a spar, but seaweed and barnacles.

And Jonah goes down to the bottom and he says, seaweed got wrapped around my head. I was at the bottom. You don't get seaweed halfway down.

You don't get seaweed two thirds of the way down. Seaweed grows out of the bottom. He's in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea and he went straight to the bottom and seaweed wrapped itself around his head.

Peter on the Sea of Galilee is walking up on the top. What is Peter's full name? Simon bar Jonah. Simon bar Jonah.

You cannot think about Simon Peter for very long without thinking of Jonah. One of them is at the bottom and one of them is at the top of the troubled sea, the storm tossed sea. Well, there is a faith to be exhibited by those who are called.

If you love God and you are the called according to his purpose, it's unlimited. God says, look, I've just called you. I've just commissioned you.

Have I not sent you? You are apostolo. This is like, he's like an old Testament apostle. He's one cent.

Go, deliver the people. Go in this might, this strength. You've got what you need.

I have prepared you and now I'm sending you. Go in this might of yours. Jonah's, but, but, but, but, is the motorboat sound we often make when God's will becomes clear, but we don't have the faith to implement it.

And he says, oh my Lord, how can I, my clan is so weak? This is heredity. And now he's going to talk about environment. I am the least in my father's house.

Everybody's bigger and busier and more impressive and got more authority and more

operating power, more experience, more talent, more this, more that, more the other. I am the least. In my father's house, my father's household, the economy here, the situation.

That's why I'm out here doing this wheat thing and everybody else is sitting in the cool of the day saying, boy, sure am hungry. Wonder when Gideon's going to bring in some flour. I am the least.

I was born into a bad situation and I live in a bad situation. My heredity is bad. My environment is bad.

The Lord said to him, how many times do I have to tell you, Gideon? I will be with you. You shall defeat the Midianites as one man. This is not you against this entire, remember how numerous it said the Midianites were? They were like swarms of locusts, their tents and their camels.

And they were just black in the landscape when they come through. And he says, look, it's going to be like mano a mano. It's going to be like one-on-one.

You're just going to go up. It's like punching a guy in the nose. You're going to defeat Midianite clans at once as though they were a single man.

Don't, it's not the size of the opponent. It's the size of your faith that counts. This isn't any more difficult.

Defeating the entire, all the, it's just slews and shiploads full of Midianites. It isn't any different defeating them and defeating one man. God has spoken it.

No different than defeating one guy. Because it's done in faith. It's done in God's power.

It's done in God's strength. It's done in the might that God builds into us through experience. And it's done in the might that he adds when he is with us.

And when he commissions us and he says, go and we go in faith. We step out of the boat and we walk on the water in faith. And we keep our eyes fixed on the one who is speaking to us.

If we are called, we keep our eyes on the one who calls. And we don't start counting the waves and thinking back on all the shipwreck stories we've ever heard. We go.

You are called. Well, Gideon says, Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, show me a sign that it is you who talk with me. Earlier, Gideon was sure that it was the Lord.

There was no question in his mind. But now, he's thinking, oh, if this turns out to be some kind of a scam that somebody's running to get me out of the barn so they can steal my wheat, I'd better make sure this... So now, he's questioning his assumptions. He's questioning his initial belief that this is a message from God.

You know, we do this sometimes. We have a situation. We have to make a decision.

We're going to process the word of God that we have in our soul. And so we do that. And here's a course that is indicated.

And we say, oh, well, wait a minute. Wait, wait, wait just a minute now. If I don't think I can do that, maybe I better go back and review the entire... Maybe I didn't really get this conclusion from the word of God because that's a path that requires faith.

That's a path that really requires relying on the presence of God. And we think, well, let me just go back and start my decision process over again. I think maybe I went astray somewhere in this deal.

Maybe this really isn't God's will and God's plan and God's purpose for me after all. And we begin to second guess and we begin to have doubts. Now, it's a healthy thing to be sure of our ground and to try to make sure we've gotten the entire witness description and so on.

But at the point where you know that this is an authoritative view from God's word, you don't have to go back and say, well, but perhaps that's just an allegorical. Maybe that interpretation is, this is a dodge. This is a rationalization because we don't really find ourselves possessed of the faith to carry out what God's word requires.

So, show me a sign that it's you who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you. What is this about? What's the whole deal with the offering? I thought Gideon had a fleece.

I don't remember anything about an offering. Well, we're gonna pause here in our study and we'll resume it next week. The angel says, I will wait until you come back and I think he'll wait until we come back next time to study this story in some detail.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the graphic way that it impresses your truth and your will on our minds.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will minister it to our hearts in such a way that we will see clearly its application in our individual circumstances, the decisions that we have to make so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that reflects fulfillment of the injunction to present ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to you as our reasonable service. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.