

Judges 08-03-28b

Let's resume our study now in Judges chapter 6. It is somewhat ironic that the people who initially, the men of the city who came to Joash and said, bring out your son that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, are ultimately going to be the ones who are delivered from their oppressors by this very man. The man that they want to kill is the agent of God's deliverance. But their eyes are not yet open to that.

But over time, their attitude is going to change. And this is to the credit of the tribe of Manasseh. It is to the credit of the clan of the Abiezrites that they are able to make this change.

It's a hard thing to admit that you're wrong. It's a hard thing to have a change of attitude. It's a hard thing to change what you've been doing for at least seven years.

And this is the place where God can effect deliverance. This is the place where God can use people. And it begins with one man.

He changes his mind. He builds his own altar to God and calls it Yahweh Shalom. Then you have the anti-sign, the non-action of Baal, which Joash points out.

And he says, Why are you having to deliver Baal? Why are you having to fight for Baal? This man should have been dead by morning, whoever tore down his altar. Let Baal fight for himself. And everyone kind of wakes up from their stupor and says, Hey, wait a minute.

God is supposed to deliver me. I'm not supposed to have to defend and deliver the God. And so this spreads from one man, Gideon, to his family and to his father's house and to his clan.

Now there is not just an individual, but a clan in Israel that is returning to God. So that when you get to verse 33, and of course God's timing is perfect. God chose the time when the angel of the Lord would appear to Gideon.

And it's in the time of the threshing and so on. And this is right before the annual visitation by the locusts of the east, the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the sons of the east. And there is time for this revival, if you will, to take root and to gain some momentum amongst the Abiezrites before the Midianites come back.

Well, now in verse 33, The Midianites and the Amalekites, the people of the east, gathered together and they crossed over and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. Now we tend to think that this is like lightning striking, that well, you know, somewhere someone in Israel is just walking along and the Spirit of the Lord comes on them and they do something great.

They grab the jawbone of an ass and slay Philistines, or they grab lamps and pitchers and go after the Midianites or something. Why does the Spirit of the Lord come upon Gideon? We have read why. He is a man of obedience.

He is a man of faith. He has had some shaky moments. He has needed some affirmation.

He has needed some encouragement from God. And guess what? God didn't quibble. God didn't remonstrate.

God didn't rebuke. God did not reprimand. God did not chastise Gideon for not having sufficient faith.

When Gideon said, Show me some sign that you are from God. Show me some sign that... God does it. He is going to do it again here with the fleas.

It is not strictly theological. You shouldn't need a sign. God's word ought to be sufficient.

But sometimes we need a boost. We need a confidence building demonstration of God's presence. And God still does this today.

I don't think it is something that we ought to necessarily ask for. But God knows what we need. And many times we can see the sign of God's presence.

And His involvement. And His close attention. In the daily course of our lives and our circumstances.

And it is affirming. God will answer prayer. God will intervene in an extraordinary way.

Something very unexpected. Something very providential will take place. And it is very clearly of God.

And we say, I shouldn't be surprised. And I shouldn't have to be encouraged in this way. But I am surprised.

And I am encouraged. To see how directly God will act and intervene. And God is our Heavenly Father.

And He knows that sometimes we need these encouragements. Because we are not perfect. And God doesn't wait for us to become perfect.

Before He works in us and through us. I can promise you that if He waited for people to be perfect. And to be fully functional.

None of the Bible classes we've had for the last umpteen years. In grace and truth would have ever taken place. I would not have.

And most men would not have the temerity. To stand up and try to teach the inspired word of God. If we thought we had to be perfect.

And to do it perfectly. It is very intimidating. It was one of the things that held me up from ever going to seminary.

I had the idea that you've got to be on such a high lofty plane. To engage in that kind of work. And one of the things that I learned.

Was that God knows that we're made of mud. We're fallen. And it is His strength and His power.

It is not our might. It is not our power. It is God's spirit.

That overcomes our weakness. And fills in those gaps. And so we can do the best we can.

And we can be diligent. Gideon is doing the best he can. And he's starting from a standing stop.

Spiritually. And he needs an affirmation. He needs a direct visit.

To get his own spiritual life underway. And then when he receives this instruction. He obeys.

He does it at night. He's afraid. He's trembling while he does it.

But he does it. And as a result. His entire family and clan.

Are converted if you will. Or reverted. They are brought back to an appreciation of God.

So that when the Midianites. And the Amalekites. And the sons of the east.

It says people. But this is sons. This is the B'nai.

These are the sons of the east. Gathered together. And they crossed over.

This is crossing over the Jordan of course. That's implied. And encamped in the veil of Jezreel.

One of the Bibles I had when I was a child. I did something on a sword drill or something. And the church gave me a Bible.

And I remember looking through it. And it had a beautiful picture of this valley. It was a color picture.

Somewhere there about in the middle of the Bible. And flowers were blooming in the foreground. And off in the distance.

These hazy mountain slopes. And it was labeled the veil of Jezreel. And that's where this is.

They've encamped in this beautiful fertile open plain. And of course there's a lot of farmland. There's a lot of agriculture going on here.

Small family farms. Larger clan endeavors are going on here. They're trying to grow crops.

And lay aside seed and grain to last the entire year. So they've plopped down in their Bedouin fashion. And they're going to use this as their base camp.

And go raid and take everything they want from the Israelites. And let the Israelites do the

work. And then they just come and take it all.

It's kind of like your proletariat versus your bourgeoisie here. They're going to let the workers work. And then they're going to come take the largest for themselves.

Well, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. Why? Because Gideon is a man upon whom the Spirit of the Lord can come. And it will do good.

We see other instances where the Spirit of the Lord comes on someone. And all they can do is fall down and kind of throw a fit. You remember God tried to put His Spirit on King Saul when He came after David.

I think that's the episode they're studying in the back room tonight, as a matter of fact. When David escapes and goes to stay with Samuel. And Saul comes after him.

And the Spirit comes on him. And he falls down and takes off his clothes and prophesies. Well, that's about the most useless thing that anybody can do with the Spirit of the Lord.

Is fall down and do the cockroach dance. He didn't go take care of the enemies of Israel. He didn't come up with a great policy or renew his kingdom for the glory of the Lord.

He fell down and gabbled and babbled. Well, God is not going to dispense His Spirit to someone who is not going to do anything useful with it. Gideon is a man building his spiritual foundation.

Building his relationship with God. Through worship and through obedience and through faith. And so the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him.

And when he blows the trumpet, notice. The Abiezrites gathered behind him. These are the same Abiezrites that were gathering to lynch him some weeks earlier.

There has been a change of heart amongst this clan. There has been a change of attitude. And it was crystallized.

It was the catalyst for this. The spark that ignited this fresh flame of faith and obedience in this clan was Gideon's personal action. He galvanizes his family.

And it begins with the individual. Moves to the family. Now you're ready to do something.

And we see this same thing. Nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Individual believer in the new.

We often think, well, I wish God would do this. I wish that there was impact. I wish that there was effect.

I wish that there was blessing. I wish that there was the presence of God and the glory of God being manifest in my life or in my family or in my environment. Well, it begins just like it does

with Gideon.

We have to have a personal one-on-one reconciliation with God. And eradicate the sin and the impediments out of our own life. And start moving out in faith and in obedience.

To the extent that we have responsibility for a household, that's next. Look at the requirements for an elder in the New Testament. If a man cannot lead well his own household, what business does he have trying to exercise leadership over an assembly for many households? It starts at the center and works concentric circles outward.

And we cannot expect and we cannot see great things in terms of God working in us and through us in a larger environment until our own personal life is squared away and then our family life. And sometimes this is done without a word. It depends on your position.

If you're in a position of authority, then you take a leadership role. Sometimes you have to just say, look, here is a sinful thing. There is sin in the camp.

I'm going to take it out and maybe it's going to upset people. Maybe it's going to set them off. Maybe it's going to create hostility.

Look at the fear in Gideon's heart. He knows what the reaction is going to be when he tears down this altar. The whole clan is ready to execute him.

But he doesn't. And that was enough faith and that was enough obedience for God to eventually deliver the entire nation through this one man's obedience. God will do the same thing in us and through us when we concentrate on what is most important, our own personal relationship with him, faith and obedience.

And then what do we have control of? What has God put in our path that we can make a difference in? Nearby, locally. I was communicating with a good friend of mine. He's been working in ministry for many years.

But he's started to realize that it is at the expense of his family. And he's in an environment where his children cannot grow and progress as they should. And it works a hardship on his wife and it's in a remote location and things are very difficult.

And he and I were talking about the fact that God does not ask us to engage in ministry at the expense of our family or at the expense of our marriage. Quite the opposite. Our marriage and family have to be strong.

Before we move beyond those borders, men who lose their family or lose their children or lose their marriage because they are traveling and they are ministering and they are preaching and teaching and investing themselves in the lives of others, that's all well and good as long as the main investment and the primary effort continues to be in that which has been assigned to you by way of marriage and family. It can be discretionary. It can be somewhat of an unknown to

whom should you address yourself.

If you're a missionary or you're a preacher or a teacher or an evangelist, where should you go? Who should you talk to? That's a little bit of an unknown. But if you have a wife and you have a family, there's no unknown at all. That is your primary mission field.

And to neglect that one in the interest of going beyond it is a great mistake. You see that reflected here. Gideon cannot be used by God.

And the Abiezrites cannot be used by God until they get themselves squared away. It starts with Gideon. It moves to the household of Joash.

And now the Midianites come in. And the Abiezrites, when they hear Gideon blow the trumpet, the very man that they were hostile toward and ready to stone, they now gather under his leadership. They are ready to follow him.

They recognize in him something that they had formerly lacked. And he has established leadership. And he has established that he has got initiative.

And he's willing to step out in faith in the name of the God of Israel. And they rally behind him. It's an extraordinary turnaround.

One that I'm sure Gideon could never have foreseen or expected when he was threshing, beating that wheat with a stick, and the angel of the Lord first appeared. But what we can't see and what we cannot anticipate, God well knows. God can well foresee what can be done when we are faithful and when we are obedient.

It's a huge turnaround. The men of the city that were asking for his head now hear the sound of the trumpet. And they gather behind him.

And now, with that unity, he sends messengers throughout all Manasseh, beyond his clan. And this revival, if you will, that began with one man, has now rippled through an entire tribe and beyond. He sent messengers to Asher, to Zebulun, and Naphtali.

And they came up to meet them. You can imagine how easy it would be. What do you mean? A man from Manasseh, the least of the tribes? And this Abiezrites, the least of the clans in that tribe? Nobody is gainsaying.

Nobody is being negative. And no one is carping and complaining and second-guessing and saying, well, we really need a different leader. And our tribe is better and more numerous.

When Gideon sends this message out, the spirit of the Lord is upon him. God gives him the words. God gives him the actions.

And he's obedient. Remember, one of the worst things, and I heard this all during my time growing up, is, in fact, there was a book published called Spirit-Controlled Temperament. It's

talking about your four basic temperaments, your phlegmatics and your choleric and your sanguins and your melancholies, and there can be a mixture of them.

And this was Tim LaHaye back in the 60s, before he had his Left Behind book series. He had this Spirit-Controlled Temperament thing. And people were all, that was the big, that was the prayer of Jabez and the experiencing God of those days was, what is your temperament? And this book came out, Spirit-Controlled Temperament, or being controlled by the Spirit.

You are not controlled by the Holy Spirit, ever. God does not control us at all. That's why the fruit of the Spirit is what kind of control? Spirit control? Self-control.

We are enjoined, we are commanded to cultivate self-control. God, the Holy Spirit, does not control anyone. This would be the equivalent of puppeteering or demon possession, taking control over someone and operating outside of their will.

When the Spirit comes upon Gideon, it is an enabling and an empowering and a guiding force. But it is Gideon making the decision to obey. It is Gideon making the decision to trust.

And because he is a man of faith and obedience, the Spirit enables and empowers. But he is not controlled by the Spirit at all. If God wanted control, he wouldn't bother inhabiting one of us.

He would just send one of these angels of the Lord to blow the trumpet and call the people and say, alright, I'm going to lead you out here and we're going to whip these Midianites. God is looking for people who will choose, who will decide, and that's you and me. So they gather, and this ripples outward, and through this one man this great change is effected.

And now you've got four tribes. You've got a third of the nation of Israel, occupying a third of the land of Israel, all back on the plan and purpose of God. So now Gideon has responded.

When the Midianites came, and he remembers what the angel of the Lord said, you're the go in this strength and deliver Israel. He says, okay. So he has blown the trumpet, and he's assembled all of these people.

He's already done this. The people have already seen. He's got four tribes worth of troops there now.

But then doubt starts to creep in. He says, who am I? It wasn't that many weeks ago I was just beating wheat with a stick. Now I'm the general of a third of the men in Israel.

And he begins to second guess. He's faltering a little bit. You think of Peter stepping out of the boat, looking at the Lord, walks a few steps, everything's going great.

But then he gets to looking around at the size of the storm and the height of the waves and the troubled sea, and he starts to sink a little. And you sense that this is what's going on with Gideon. He begins to see what a big endeavor this is, and a lot of people's lives are on the line, and he begins to falter a little.

So Gideon said to God, if you will indeed deliver Israel by my hand as you have said, and right there, if God says it, you know, God says it, I believe it, that settles it. It's one thing to say that little thing. It's another thing to truly rest.

This is one of the biggest problems we have in the world today. And this is up and down. You can be looking at heads of gigantic ministries and large churches and great Christian organizations and mission endeavors, or you can be looking at small fry and just normal lay people, they like to call them in the denominational church.

From top to bottom in the church today, we have a real problem with taking God at His word, with actually committing our way to God. People get a vision. A pastor of a church will get a vision that a certain thing needs to happen in his church, but then he starts to use human methods to raise the money or to marshal the people or to get the circumstances to go that way.

Well, he's got some opposition, so I'm going to replace some people and get this board and this committee and this thing to go a certain way. Where is taking God at His word? If this is indeed God's will, if your plan of action is God's will, take God at His word. If it's God's will, will God make provision for it? Say you've got a child getting ready to go to college.

You say, well, this college costs a certain amount of money. I don't have that certain amount of money, and I don't know where it's going to come from. Well, do I believe that this is where they are going to go or not? If I do, then I figure God is going to reveal some provision.

And if you're not supposed to go there, then there won't be provision. But if it's the will of God, then you don't have to worry. Make your due diligence, do your investigation, find whatever resources are available, take out whatever loans or do whatever you have to do, and trust that God will provide.

If it's the will of God, then how can you go wrong? What disaster can follow if it's the will of God? Nothing is a disaster. You can be arrested and thrown to the lions. It's not a disaster if it's the will of God.

You can be imprisoned and chained between two Roman guards like the Apostle Paul. It's not a disaster if it's the will of God. It's a blessing.

Paul says, this is the greatest thing that ever happened. The whole Praetorian Guard has been evangelized. The Caesar is surrounded by Christians.

Because Paul got locked up. And Paul didn't look at it as a bad thing. He figured, you know, it's the will of God.

And Christianity spread through the royal household in Rome. Because Paul got arrested. It wasn't a bad thing.

It was a great thing. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul? Captive audience there. Two guys he could preach at all day long.

And they can't get away. They're chained to him. What an opportunity.

And those guys go and talk to others. And first thing you know, he's surrounded by brothers in Christ. His imprisonment is in hospitality, because these are men who have come to love Jesus Christ and come to appreciate God through the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

And now, instead of being hostile guards, they're his brothers and his family in Christ. I mean, what kind of an imprisonment is that? It's great. He has fellowship and gets to explain and take advantage of all of his Old Testament knowledge.

And explain it to these former pagans, former Gentiles. These men go home and evangelize their families and teach their children. And Christianity spreads like wildfire through Rome, because one man had a bad thing happen.

He got locked up and got chained in the dungeon. And as a result, God just glorifies his name all the way through. We have to learn to trust that God knows what he's doing and rest.

Well, Gideon is faltering. He's saying, this thing is really getting too big for me. You remember that speech I gave of being least in my father's house and least tribe, least clan? And look at all of these people.

If you will indeed save Israel by my hand, as you have said. Look, same thing that the narrator said up above. Look, the altar is torn down.

Look, the asher has been sawed up and burned. Look, the prized bull is on the rocks, smoldering. Look, he says to God, 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. Notice this is the second time he says, I know what you said. I'm just having trouble placing my confidence in it.

And this is an important point for us to muse upon. Because sometimes we get to thinking, I hear a lot of Bible class. I do a lot of Bible study.

I know a lot of the word of God. I've done verse-by-verse study for many years. And I know what God says.

Ask me anything. What are the five types of death? What are the five kinds of baptism? What are the five ministries of the Holy Spirit? What are the ten elements of the essence box? What's the Hebrew for Genesis 1-1? What's the Greek for John 3-16? I can tell you all of those things. Backwards and forwards, I've got it nailed.

I can tell you what the trumpets and the bowls and all of that, the thunder and who it is that's

standing around the throne, and who the elder. I can tell you all of those things. We know the word of the Lord.

That is not spiritual life. Knowledge of God's word is not spiritual strength. Gideon knows what God has said.

You have said you will save Israel by my hand, Gideon says. He knows exactly what God says. He remembers it word for word.

How does he end? Then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said. He begins and ends with this bracket. You have said that you will deliver Israel by my hand.

What's Gideon's problem? Knowledge? No. Faith. We may not doubt the truth of what we hear, but we, like Gideon, have a responsibility to believe and act in faith on what we know.

We know a lot of things that the word of God says about how we should behave, how we should think, how we should present ourselves as living sacrifices, and so on. It's not a matter of knowledge. It's a matter of following through, making it happen, being obedient, stepping out in faith.

That's spiritual life. That's spiritual strength. So Gideon says, I'll put this fleece of wool on the threshing floor.

If there is dew on the fleece only and it's dry on the ground all around, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said. And it was so. God doesn't reply.

God doesn't say, okay, fine. God doesn't chew him out. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.

The fleece is sopping wet, and the ground is dry all around. So Gideon initially says, wow, that's really something. And then he gets to thinking, well, you know, dew, when it gets on a rock, the rock tends to heat up and it might have evaporated off of the rock and just stayed.

Maybe this is a natural occurrence. Maybe this was not an act of God. Maybe this is just a coincidence.

I really should have asked the other way around, because it would really be remarkable if the rock was wet and the fleece was dry. So he says, Lord, 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. You think about this sign. We talked about the beginning sign, the goat meal and the half a bushel of flour turned into bread disappearing in flames.

By the way, there was another interesting observation made about that. You remember the judgment seat of Christ, and there are two kinds of works that are going to be judged there.

There are works that are done in faith and in obedience and in the strength of God, and that's the gold and the silver and the precious stones.

And then there is the wood, the hay and the stubble of our works, things that we've generated in our own strength, with our own plan, apart from God. And I forget who it was. Someone mentioned last week that it seems that we talked at length about how much work Gideon and his servants put into that meal, and then it just got incinerated.

All of Gideon's work just got burned up. And there might be a suggestion there that, you know, the angel didn't sit there and partake of it and eat it, it just got instantly flashed out of existence. But Gideon says, let me test once more.

Now, what is Gideon's problem? All from the beginning, is this really what you want me to do? And isn't this our dilemma many times, our quandary? We think and we analyze and we try to figure out, what does God want me to do? Should I stay or should I go? Should I jump or should I stand? Should I raise, call, or fold? What should I do here? What is God's will for my life? What is God's will in this particular situation? Well, how much Bible does Gideon have? Does Gideon have a copy of the law? Does Gideon have an example of the law in ritual form through the ministry of the Levites? Does Gideon have anything other than half-remembered verbal stories of God's word? He doesn't. He doesn't have anything to which he can refer. The Levites have completely fallen down on the job and they're not doing anything that would provide a flannel graph or a, what would you call it now? People won't use flannel graphs.

It would be a PowerPoint presentation of God's word. That's what the Levitical system of ritual sanctification and sacrifice was. It was a visual to teach God's word to people who didn't read and write and have copies of God's word.

Well, none of that exists in Gideon's day, so we can understand a little bit that he wants to be sure that this is God speaking to him, that this is really God's will. We do not need a supernatural sign from God because we do have his word. When that which is complete is come, that which is in part is done away.

How many times can you, you know, every time Gideon is going to make a decision from now to the end of his life, is he going to stick out a fleece and make sure that it's God? Remember, God authenticates his messengers when there is a new message, like Moses, like the Lord Jesus, like the apostles. He authenticates with signs so that people know that this message and this messenger are truly divinely commissioned, divinely sent. Well, Gideon is sort of in that position.

He is getting a message and there is no precedent. And so God confirms it with a supernatural sign. It does not mean that we should expect to be able to put out a fleece or do anything by way of confirmation other than look in God's word because we have something that works every day.

The fleece is kind of a two-time deal, two successive nights, and Gideon is done with fleece measurements. You know, the dampness of a fleece thing. He needed to be sure that this was indeed from God.

So God this time has the fleece be dry and there is dew on all the ground. So this is just confirmation that he is on the right track. Sometimes we step back and say, I wonder if I am really on the right track.

How do we essentially put out our fleece? How do we make sure that we are acting in accordance with God's will and God's purpose? Where do we go for that confirmation? Well, you have it here in your hands. It is the word of God. We have the spirit of God to confirm the word and to lead us into the truth.

So Gideon has now received these confirmations from God that this is indeed what he is supposed to do. But of course he knew this. He has already blown the trumpet.

He has already assembled the troops. And now Jerubbaal, that is Gideon, chapter 7, and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Herod so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. We will talk a little bit about this geography coming up.

But now the Lord says to Gideon. It does not tell us how he said it. Is this another voice in the night? It does not say.

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. What is the point here? The trimming down of the troops. We know that he is going to end up with just a handful.

What was the issue with Baal? What did Joash proclaim to the Abiezrites? Are we having to be Baal's deliverer? Are we having to fight to deliver Baal? To protect Baal? What is the matter with this picture? A god is supposed to be one who fights for you. A god is supposed to be one who exhibits his power on your behalf, not the other way around. And God says, I want to be sure the issue is clear here.

That you are not fighting for me against the Midianites. I am fighting for you against the Midianites. As we have seen in both of our studies, in John and in Judges, the issue is the glory of God.

The Midianites are no problem for God. God could have stopped all of their hearts overnight. They all wake up dead in their tents out there in the valley of Jezreel.

The Midianites are not a problem for God. The Amalekites are not a problem for God. The sons of the east are not a problem for God.

God could incinerate them just like he did that goat meat. Why is he using Gideon and these men? They have to exercise faith. They have to learn to rely on God.

And what are they going to see at the end of this process? God is the God who delivers his people. God is the God who delivers the person of faith. God is the God who delivers the obedient believer.

And that's the whole point. I don't want Israel to claim glory for itself against me. I want Israel to recognize the glory of God.

That's God's point. Proclaim in the hearing of the people, therefore, saying, Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead. It was okay for Gideon to have a spirit of fear when he tore down the altar of Baal.

But there has been progress. There has been growth. And God doesn't want any fear in the camp now.

We all grow in grace and in knowledge. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind, soberness, self-control. We should outgrow our early doubts.

We should outgrow our early fears. God allowed Gideon to be obedient and to tear down that altar and to sacrifice that bull with a spirit of fear. But he is not going to have these individuals go against the Midianites with a spirit of fear.

Anybody that's afraid, go home. Depart at once from Mount Gilead. Twenty-two LFs of the people, twenty-two groups, I would imagine these to be company-sized units.

Twenty-two companies went home. And these could be really small. These might just be platoon-sized units.

An LF is just a cohesive unit of indeterminate size. There are not twenty-two thousand warriors in the entire area here. So these are twenty-two LFs, twenty-two units go home.

Ten units remain. So, how many tribes are out here? There's Manasseh and Asher and who else? Zebulun and Naphtali, so there's four tribes. There's a total of thirty-two units out there.

So if all the tribes contributed equally, there would be eight units, eight LFs from each tribe. And now, twenty-two of those have gone home. There's probably a few left from each tribe.

But there are ten units left. The Lord said to Gideon, the people are still too many. Bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there.

Now, remember earlier, Gideon says, Lord, don't be angry, but I would like to test with the fleece. Now, God says, I am going to test the people. You've tested to see whether God is speaking or not.

He is speaking. Well, now God is going to test to see who is listening or not. And even though it says, thou shalt not test the Lord thy God, the idea here is, well, you've tested and found that God is God.

Now God is going to test and see who is going to respond to that knowledge in faith and in obedience. I will test them for you there. It will be that of whom I say to you, this one shall go with you, the same shall go with you.

Whomever I say to you, this one shall not go with you, the same shall not go. So this is also going to be a test for Gideon. Gideon has to believe that God is picking the right people.

So he brought the people down to the water. The Lord said to Gideon, everyone who laps from the water with his tongue as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself. Likewise, everyone who gets down on his knees to drink, the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to the mouth was 300 men.

The rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Now, let me ask you something. Which is more tactically sound? To get the water and put your hand to your mouth and kind of suck it up? People can't really lap water with their tongue.

You know, dogs, I didn't know this for a long time, but when dogs drink and they stick their tongue in the water and you hear that slop, slop, slop noise, they're curving their tongue under and the water is coming from the underside of their tongue like a cup. And the water is scooped into their mouth with the underside of their tongue as it's cup shaped. The top of their tongue isn't doing anything.

It's the underside. Well, people can't do that. But he says, laps as a dog laps.

And this means bringing the water up to their mouth and basically drinking from their hand. The others got down on their knees to drink. Well, this is just sort of an arbitrary division.

I've heard people say, well, the people who are bringing it to their mouth, they're more alert and they're going to be better soldiers because they're able to look up. The people who are down on their knees, it's not a good tactical move. It's not the way a soldier ought to act to get down on his knees and leave himself exposed.

These other people are apparently sitting on their heels or kneeling down and up and able to see. I don't think this is it at all. What is the insult that gets bandied about during this phase of ancient history? What does Goliath say to David? Am I a dog that you come to me with a sling and a stone? Am I a dog? Dog-like is an insult.

I am a dead dog, a guy says in another place. Dogs, the woman talking about the dogs eating the crumbs that fall from the children's table. It was lowly, it was insignificant, it was insulting to be associated with a dog or to be thought of as a dog.

And God says, those who are lapping from their hands, they are like dogs. And that's the ones I'm going to use. It's symbolic.

The whole purpose of this weeding out is to make sure people understand that it is God's power that accomplishes this deliverance through obedient people, through those who heard the trumpet call and responded, to those who follow God's instructions and who don't ask questions. Guess what? Not everybody has every mission. These people who kneel down to drink the water, what is the difference in them and the ones who left? You think, well, on any given day somebody might do one and might do the other.

It's sometimes in the inscrutable providences of God that one person is going to do one thing and another is going to do another. You spend all your time praying and wishing that somebody in your family would get the gospel and be saved and they meet somebody on a bus and that person evangelizes them and they get saved. And you think, why didn't I get that privilege? Why didn't I get to be the person? I've been praying for them and thinking about them and concerned about them for years and here they go off someplace and God uses somebody else to get them saved.

And you think, why is that? It is a reminder that it is God who is working. God has it all figured out. And there are some things that we don't have to understand, we just obey.

God will send some of us home. All of these people responded to the trumpet call. All of these people lined up and were willing to follow Gideon.

And God sent a bunch of them home. And not necessarily because they did something wrong. Those who were fearful, you could say, well, maybe they needed to go home.

But two different kinds of drinking, what difference does it make? God chose just 300 and He said, here's how you'll tell. And it's a mystery why these would be chosen. But the Lord said in verse 7, By the 300 men who lapped, I will save you.

By the 300 who are no better than dogs, I can save Israel through 300 dog men. That's what the Marines like to call the Army sometimes, they call them doggies. Because it's done affectionately.

But these 300 doggies, that's what I'm going to use to save. These men don't have to be great warriors. You know how this story goes.

God is going to accomplish the deliverance. The Midianites are going to largely slaughter themselves. Not by might, nor by power.

It is a deliverance effected by God. And that's the point. All we have to do is be faithful.

All we have to do is be obedient. God will accomplish the deliverance. He is looking for those who will trust.

He is looking for those who will obey. And we want to be those people. That's how God is glorified in this age.

That's how God is glorified throughout eternity. He is manifesting his strength, manifesting his grace, manifesting his deliverance among people who will simply trust him. Well, we'll pick up and see the outcome of this attack by the 300 next time.

But we'll close here for tonight in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and the graphic way that it illustrates for us the timeless nature of your dealings with those who believe, those who are part of your family, who are the called, who are seeking to fulfill your purpose. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will remind us of these things as we encounter our daily challenges and our opportunities, that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and that our lives will reflect your glory.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.