

Series: Lessons From the Lives of the Judges

# THE CHALLENGE OF GIDEON

JUDGES 6:33-40

Text:

Introduction:

God is in the process of training Gideon to be the next deliverer of Israel.

As part of his training, God commanded Gideon to destroy an altar to Baal and to build an altar to Jehovah in its place.

Gideon passed that test with flying colors. The people in his village were not pleased by Gideon's actions.

They wanted to kill him for what he had done.

Gideon's father stepped in and defended his son's actions.

It would appear that Gideon's father was challenged by his son's courage and convicted by his own compromise.

After that very public test came a time of private testing. This second test was not instigated by God, but by Gideon. He had demonstrated great bravery in his

public testing, but he sows a clear lack of faith in this time of private testing. Someone has said that, “who you are in private is who you really are”. I suppose there is some truth to that statement.

Today we will consider The Challenge of Gideon:

Note:

## **1. GIDEON AND HIS FAITH (vs. 33-34)**

### ***Judges 6:33-34***

*<sup>33</sup> Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. <sup>34</sup> But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.*

As this scene opens, we see a young Gideon energized and excited from his recent victory, calling Israel to prepare for war. This is the Gideon the Lord saw when He first commissioned Gideon for the task of delivering God’s people.

Note:

### **A. Gideon’s Enemy (vs. 33)**

It is harvest time in Israel, v. 11. The crops are being gathered in. For the past seven years, v. 1, the

Midianites and their allies have used Israel as their own private pantry.

They would come in and take the harvest for themselves, leaving the people of Israel destitute and broken, vv. 3-7.

This is what is taking place in this verse.

### B. Gideon's Engagement (vs. 34)

#### ***Judges 6:34***

<sup>34</sup> *But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.*

When the enemy comes, Gideon has the courage to do what no man has done in over seven years.

From that period of time, the war trumpets of Israel had been silent.

No one in the land had possessed the courage to pick up that trumpet and call the people to war.

Gideon appears ready for the task he has been assigned.

He places his hand on the trumpet, licks his lips and calls Israel to gather for battle.

## C. Gideon's Energy (vs. 34)

### **Judges 6:34**

<sup>34</sup> But **the Spirit of the LORD** came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

Where did get this kind of courage? We are told that “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon”. God took control of Gideon and caused him to sound the war call.

Notice not only Gideon and His Faith but also:

## **2. GIDEON AND HIS FOLLOWING (VS. 34-35)**

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

<sup>34</sup> But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. <sup>35</sup> And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

When Gideon sounds the war trumpet the people begin to rally around him. Let's take a moment to consider the people who responded to Gideon's call.

Note:

## A. A Close Following (vs. 34c)

### **Judges 6:34**

<sup>34</sup> *But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.*

We are told that “Abi-ezer” came to stand with Gideon. This is a reference to Gideon’s own clan. These are the very people who wanted to kill him in verse 30. There had been a change in their attitude toward Gideon.

Evidently, his family and those who lived around him adopted Gideon’s reforms. They are a changed people. Instead of wanting him dead, they are ready to follow his leadership.

Note also:

## B. A Committed Following (vs. 35)

### **Judges 6:35**

<sup>35</sup> *And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.*

Gideon calls the other tribes living around them to come to the battle. Several of the tribes respond to Gideon’s call. Judges 7:3 tells us that Gideon now has an army of 32,000 men.

This seems to be a small number when it is compared to the 135,000 man army of the enemy.

Before the dust settles and the enemy is defeated, God will us just 300 men to defeat the vast army of the Midianites.

We are living in a time when it appears that the enemies outnumber the people of God.

It seems that way because it is true. Satan has far more servants at his disposal that the Lord does.

We should not be disturbed by that fact.

We simply need to remember that when God's Spirit is in control of God's people, He enables them to accomplish amazing victories.

Notice lastly:

### **3. GIDEON AND HIS FLEECE (VS. 36-40)**

#### ***Judges 6:36-40***

*<sup>36</sup> And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, <sup>37</sup> Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. <sup>38</sup> And it was so: for he rose up early on*

*the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. <sup>39</sup> And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. <sup>40</sup> And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.*

Gideon has displayed great courage in calling the people to war and gathering together his army.

That was the public Gideon.

In private, Gideon is still filled with doubts concerning what the Lord is calling him to do.

In these verses we will see the doubt of Gideon on display.

Let's look at what he did and learn why we need to avoid doing the same.

Note:

## A. Gideon's Doubt (vs. 36)

### **Judges 6:36**

<sup>36</sup> *And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,*

The key word in this verse is the word "if". God had already told Gideon repeatedly what He wanted him to do, vv. 12, 14, 16. Gideon is not content to simply trust the Lord and take him at his word. Gideon wants some kind of tangible proof that he can see with his own eyes that this is God's will. In other words, Gideon is not willing to walk by faith; he wants to walk by sight too.

## B. Gideon's Demand (vs. 37, 39)

### **Judges 6:37**

<sup>37</sup> *Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.*

### **Judges 6:39**

<sup>39</sup> *And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.*



Gideon comes up with a test to determine God's will. In verse 37, he places a piece of sheepskin on the ground and asks the Lord to make the fleece wet and the ground around it dry. God does exactly what Gideon asks him to do, v. 38.

### C. Gideon's Disobedience (vs. 38)

#### ***Judges 6:38***

*<sup>38</sup> And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.*

This does not satisfy the mind of Gideon, because he knows that a piece of sheepskin is like a sponge.

It will soak up all the available moisture in the air around it.

So, even though he was able to wring a bowl full of water from the fleece, he is still not convinced.

The next night he asks God to reverse the conditions of the test.

Make the ground wet and the fleece dry. God does this too.

## D. Gideon's Direction (vs. 40)

### **Judges 6:40**

<sup>40</sup> *And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.*

Apparently, this satisfies Gideon because he does not question God's call again. Of course, he could have just taken God at His Word and he would have arrived at the same place two days earlier. Gideon wasted two precious days playing this fleece game with the Lord.

- Gideon faced the same problem we all face in life. He simply lacked the faith to take God at His Word. God told Gideon what He wanted him to do, vv. 12, 14, 16, but Gideon was not willing to simply trust the Lord by faith.

God expects His people to walk with Him in humble faith in His Word and His promises.

- Gideon learned that seeking a sign does not solve the problem. He got a wet fleece the first time, but he still wasn't sure it was the Lord's work. Did God cause the fleece to be wet, or did the fleece simply draw moisture from the air? Gideon was not better off after the first fleece than he was before. He still had the same promises from the Lord, but he still also possessed the same problem of doubt.

- The real problem with “putting out a fleece” is that a fleece is always placed out of doubt and not faith. “Putting out a fleece” is not the biblical method for determining the will of God. It is a method used by people like Gideon who lack the faith to simply trust the Word of God.

While God honored Gideon’s fleece, it is not His will that we should determine the direction of our lives by seeking signs from the Lord. Even Gideon knew that what he was doing was wrong, v. 39.

***Judges 6:39***

*<sup>39</sup> And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.*

We have something Gideon did not possess. We have the completed Word of God. God’s will is that we take His Word, saturate our lives with its truth and trust Him to take us where He will for His glory.

Close:

When a traveler in the early days of the west, came to the Mississippi, he discovered there was no bridge. Fortunately it was winter and the great river was sheeted over with ice. But the traveler was afraid to trust himself to it, not knowing how thick it was.

Finally with great caution, he crept on his hands and knees and managed to get halfway over. And then he heard singing from behind.

Cautiously he turned, and there, out of the dusk, came another traveler, driving a four-horse load of coal over the ice, singing as he went!

Gideon, and us, are just like that traveler. We are afraid to take a step of faith and obediently serve the Lord. Have you ever stopped to think about what could be accomplished for the glory of God in this world if every believer simply did what God wanted him or her to do?

There would be more power and glory in the church. There would be more souls saved. There would be more of the miraculous manifestations of God's presence and power in the world. Far more would be accomplished than we could ever imagine, if God's people would merely take Him at His Word and step out on faith!

Are we doing what the Lord has called us to do?

Do we hold back out of a lack of faith in Him?

Are we guilty of looking for signs instead of simply taking God at His Word?

Follow His will and you will never be sorry.

Fail to do that and you will ever so sorry.