

He is Graciously Patient with Us

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Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to the book of Judges. If you're visiting with us, you can pull that Bible out in a chair in front of you and start in Genesis, the first book, and go to page 184, Judges chapter 6 this morning.

Judges 6. Judges chapter 6. We're working through the book of Judges. And that's our theme for the book of Judges. Judges is about God's overwhelming, never-ending, relentless love for his people.

That's how much he loves those who belong to him, whom he's chosen before the foundation of the world, his love for them, for his people. You see that in the book of Judges, this theme.

Judges 6 this morning, page 184 in that black Bible. Let me read and then we'll jump in and look at this whole chapter. It wasn't gonna be fun. It wasn't. Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh.

And Yahweh gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. And the power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian, the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens, which were in the mountains, and the caves and the strongholds.

[1:18] For it was when Israel had sown that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. So they would camp against him and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza.

Leave no sustenance in Israel, as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. They would come up with their livestock and their tents. They would come in like locusts for number.

But they and their camels were innumerable. They came into the land to devastate it. So Israel was brought very low because of Midian. And the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh. It came about when the sons of Israel cried out to Yahweh on account of Midian that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel.

And he said to them, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land.

And I said to you, I am Yahweh your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live, but you have not obeyed me. Verse 11. Then the angel of Yahweh came and sat under the oak that was in Uphrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abirits.

[2:35] And his son Gideon was beating out its wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. The angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said to him, The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.

Then Gideon said to him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, Did not Yahweh bring us up from Egypt? But now Yahweh has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.

And the Lord looked at him and said, Go, and this your strength, and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? And he said to him, O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel?

Behold, my family is Delis and Manasseh. I am the youngest in my family's house. But the Lord said to him, Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man. So Gideon said to him, If now I have found favor in your sight, then show me a sign.

It is you who speak with me. Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my offering and lay it before you. And he said, I will remain until you return. Verse 19, Then Gideon went and prepared a kid and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour.

[3:42] He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot and brought it out to him under the oak and presented it. And the angel of God said to him, Take the meats and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock and pour out the broth.

And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of his staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread.

Then the angel of Yahweh vanished from his sight. When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, he said, Alas, O Adonai Yahweh, for now I've seen the angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said to him, Peace to you, Do not fear, you shall not die.

Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it Yahweh Shalom. To this day it is an ophan of the Abarits. Now, the same night came about that the Lord said to him, Take your father's bull and the second bull, seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father and cut down the Asherah that is beside it and built an altar to Yahweh your God on top of his stronghold in an orderly manner and take a second bull and offer a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.

Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had spoken to him and came about because he was too afraid of his father's household and the men of the city to do it by day that he did it by night.

[5:03] Verse 28, And the men of the city arose early in the morning. Behold, the altar of Baal was torn down and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built and they said to one another, Who did this thing?

When they searched about and inquired, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash, did this thing. The men of the city said to Joash, Bring out your son that he may die for he's torn down the altar of Baal and indeed he's cut down the Asherah which was beside it.

But Joash said to all who stood against him, Will you contend for Baal or will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is God, let him contend for himself because someone has torn down his altar.

Therefore on that day he named them Jerubbaal. That is to say, let Baal contend against him because he'd torn down his altar. There's verse 33, Then all the Midianites and the Malachites and the sons of the east assembled themselves and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Israel.

So the spirit of Yahweh came upon Gideon. He blew a trumpet and the Abirits were called together to follow him and he sent messengers throughout Manasseh and they also were called together to follow him and he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali and they came up to meet them.

[6:15] Then Gideon said to God, If you deliver Israel by my hand as you've spoken, behold, I'll put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there's dew on the fleece only and it is dry on all the ground, then I will know that you will deliver Israel through me by my hand as you've spoken.

It was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he drained the dew from the fleece a bowl full of water. Then Gideon said to God, Do not let your anger burn against me that I may speak once more.

Please let me take a test once more with the fleece. Let it now be dry only on the fleece and let there be dew on all the ground. And God did so that night for it was dry only on the fleece and dew was on all the ground.

Authorities urged patients release few details and shoot out that killed man officer.

It's the title of the article, online article in the newsgazette.com. It was like Wednesday. The article says this, quote, Illinois State Police leading the investigation into the deaths of Champaign police officer and the man who reportedly shot him early Wednesday morning outside a North Champaign apartment complex are urging patients on the part of the public.

[7:29] Both Officer Christopher Oberheim, 44, and Darian Lafayette, 24, died from injuries. They received in an exchange of gunfire about 3.25 a.m. at the town center apartments in the 2400 block of North Neal Street.

End quote. Why do they need to ask for patience? That was my question. Don't you think that's weird? Maybe before another round of mob violence and rioting takes place?

Maybe that's why. The truth needs to be confirmed so don't have a short fuse. Have a long fuse. That's what patience means. Long suffering.

A long fuse. You know someone has a short fuse? Bad temper. Fly off the handle with a short fuse. But you're supposed to have a long fuse. Like the Bugs Bunny cartoon. Hairless wolf. There's a long fuse and Bugs Bunny lights it and it goes all the way around over the log down the thing.

[8:34] And it goes to a TNT and it blows up in his face. It's kind of funny. One of my favorites. But God doesn't blow up like that. God has a long fuse. God is patient.

He's long suffering. When he could blow up at us when he should blow up at us he doesn't. He has this overwhelming never ending relentless love for his people and today we'll see he's graciously patient with us.

God is graciously patient with us. Remember he wants us to solely want him. That's the subtitle of the book of Judges.

He wants you to solely want him. And he'll discipline you to make that happen. He will. The Lord knows those who are his and let the one who named the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness.

And if you're not as we read in Hebrews chapter 12 he'll discipline you because he loves you. And he's graciously patient. He disciplines us so that he would be our one and only true love.

[9:49] How can you describe this chapter Judges chapter 6? Oh I have this up here. Cool. I didn't know I had that. He wants us to solely want him. He will discipline us to make that happen.

He disciplines us so that he be our one and only true love. This is what I wanted to say. This is a summary of the whole chapter. God is graciously patient with our small faith.

He cares more about our love for him than having a pain free life. He loves to come down to our level. And he calls us to true repentance and to fervently love him.

His gracious patience is a sum picture of the gospel. That's how you can sum up this chapter. And we're going to look at these individually and not necessarily in this order.

You're going to see this unfold for you in this chapter in Judges chapter 6. And here this judgeship of Gideon is the longest portion in the book of Judges.

[10:47] Even longer than Samson. I think like three, four, five or so verses. Longer than Samson. And Israel won a huge astonishing victory by Gideon's hand.

It's even greater than Deborah. Even greater than Barak that we looked at last week and the week before that. But as you can see, God is graciously patient with us.

God is graciously patient. first, he cares more about our love for him than us having a pain-free life. He cares more about you and me loving him than you and me having a life without pain. You see the first ten verses, notice what happens once again.

Verse 1, the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. Forty years apiece, chapter 5, verse 31, and Israel went right back to their idolatry.

[11:52] Once again, we see Israel's fickleness and their affection for other lovers. And notice Yahweh's disciplining hand.

And Yahweh, or the Lord, gave them into the hands of Midian for seven years. And yet notice what happens here in verse 2 through 6. Samuel, which we believe he's the one who wrote this, Samuel gave us a detailed description of this distress, of this oppression.

The Midianites, they were desert nomads. And what they would do, they would blow into Palestine each harvest, and they would extract all the crops, notice verse 5, for they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts.

You ever have locusts in your garden? It eats everything, kind of like javelina. Think about javelina. Let's put javelina in there. They come up like javelina. They ate everything that's in your garden. You want to shoot those things. Hopefully you're not. Anyway, they came in, taking everything in sight, leaving Israel nothing. Then they leave.

[13:08] And then they would allow their livestock to pasture the rest of the land. Probably left the residual force in Israel to just kind of monitor things and keep their eye on people.

Look at verse 3, where it was when Israel had sown, the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites. See, they would go to this, what's called the Estreilon Plain.

It's a beautiful plain, very fertile, the finest place for growing all this different wheat and grain. Israel would sow their crops there. So Manasseh, which is really close right there, they suffered the most.

Asherwood, Zebulun, Naphtali, they were suffering from this. It was so bad. Notice, it says here, the sons of Israel made for themselves, verse 2, the dens which are in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds, they lived like animals to protect themselves, to protect their food and to protect their livestock.

And do you see how Samuel reflects upon this in verse 6? Israel was brought very low. So of course what did they do?

[14 : 24] Ah! Ah! They cried out to the Lord. But again, take note. They did not repent.

They wanted God to rescue them. So this was a cry for help. Not a cry of repentance over their sin. So they cried to the Lord and who did the Lord send?

A deliverer and Gideon came and no, that doesn't happen like that, does it? Who comes first? verse 7. It came about when the sons of Israel cried to Yahweh on account of Midian verse 8.

The Lord sent a prophet. A prophet? Wait a minute, what did you send a prophet for? I don't want a prophet, I want to deliver. Get me out of this mess. Right? a mess which you did yourself.

You dug your own grave, Israel. First he sent a prophet to speak to the people and the prophet rebuked them. Look at verse 8.

[15 : 33] Thus says the Lord, I who brought you up from Egypt. Verse 9, I deliver you from the hands of the Egyptians, from your oppressors, dispossessed them.

I said to you, I am Yahweh, your God. I deliver you from the Egyptians. I deliver you from oppressors. I dispossessed your oppressors. I gave you this land. I was the one who loved you. I was the one who cared for you. He showed them his great grace. So you should say, Yahweh, you are our God. You shall not fear the gods, the Amorites.

And he used this in a general sense of the inhabitants of Palestine. That's why he said to the Amorites, they should only love, want, and fear Yahweh alone because he alone is God. He is only the one true God.

He delivered so that they would love him and want him only. But notice what the prophet says, but you have not obeyed me. End of verse 10.

[16 : 33] They wanted to do their own thing. Israel needs to understand why God oppressed them, why Midian oppressed them, that was more important than a rescue.

It's hard. It's hard when we want to escape from our circumstances and situations while God wants us to understand why we may be under those circumstances or those situations.

He wants to give us insight before he gives us safety. God will be happy. That's because holiness is more important to God than you having a pain-free life. You know, when I say that, that stings.

And when you hear that, that should sting. Does God want you to be happy?

You hear non-Christians say that, right? People don't know Jesus. They say, God wants me to be happy. Sort of. Happy in him.

[17 : 40] Happy with him. Happy because of him. But not happy without him. One writer puts it like this.

Quote, God means to instruct us, not pacify us. Loving and wanting the Lord Jesus is more significant and vital than living a life of happiness without pain or turmoil.

than living a life where, guess what? You do get what you want. That's not what it's about. And God brings us pain and turmoil so we will learn to love him more instead of loving no pain, no turmoil, or getting what we want.

He must be our soul love. And you know, it's God's word, it always exposes the reasons for our helplessness and misery, doesn't it?

Which is his grace towards us. This is his grace. God is being gracious to Israel, even him saying, bringing this prophet to them. This is his grace.

[19 : 04] It's when his word criticizes you and corrects you and reproves you. That is when you see his gracious hand upon you showering you with your real need.

Him. God. Christ. That's your real need. That's our real need. God. He cares more about you loving him than about you having a nice, wonderful, wonderful life.

He cares more about that. You focusing on him. Second, you see, God is graciously patient. He loves to come down to our level.

Notice again, once again, the end of verse 10, but you've not obeyed me. Okay, so now what?

What was Yahweh gonna do? The text almost leaves us in suspense. You gotta go, huh? What's gonna happen?

Notice, this is amazing, how God initiates, how God moves. Look at the next part. Look at the verbs.

[20 : 21] Then Yahweh, the angel of Yahweh, came and sat. God initiates.

You know, you mess up royally, and yet God comes down. You messed up so bad, and yet God comes and sits with you.

When he should wipe us out, he comes down to our level and saves us. When he should judge and condemn us because of our stupidity, he rescues us.

Isn't that amazing? Isn't it great? You didn't obey. You should have obeyed. You should be destroyed, but then God himself comes down to us.

What a picture of Christ. What a picture of the gospel. And then look at verse 12. We're talking about Gideon in just a second, but look at verse 12. So, and he said to Yahweh, he appeared to him and said to him, what?

[21 : 26] The Lord is with you. The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior. Wow. What should this remind you of? This will remind you of later on, the New Testament, the first chapter.

What is it? He'll be called Emmanuel, God with us. Emmanuel. How does God save his people? He comes down to be with us and save us. Wow. Wow. It's a picture of the gospel. Wow. And he's, the Lord's with you.

Oh, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? Moses, Joshua, Abraham, Jacob, David, Romans. If God is for us, who is against us? Well, it's everywhere in the Bible.

No. One writer says this about this promise, God is with us. We can quote, we can handle quote, a lot with that promise.

[22 : 28] We can. Now, it does not answer your questions, when, how, where, why, doesn't answer those questions, does it?

But it does give you the what, or rather, it gives you the who, which is most essential. God's with you.

So he comes here to Gideon, in verse 11, the Abirites, or Abirites. Gideon, he lived in that plain, the tribe of Manasseh.

He was the youngest. He was a nobody. You know, this old valiant warrior, Gideon's probably like, what are you talking to me?

What do you mean, valiant warrior? I'm nobody. What are you talking to me for? Notice he's beating out wheat. Notice where he's doing it. Beating out wheat, in the wine press.

[23 : 28] When was the last time you see people beating out wheat in a wine press? You're not supposed to do that there. It's for pressing wine. Why was he doing that?

He's doing it in secret. He's trying to salvage food from the Midianites for his clan. And then look what happens in verses 13 through 16.

This exchange between the angel of Yahweh, who is Christophany, it's a visible appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ, and Gideon.

Verse 13. First, 12. The Lord's with you. Verse 13. Gideon says, Oh my Lord, the Lord with us. Why does all this happen? Where are all the miracles that the fathers told us about?

Did not the Lord be himself from Israel? He's abandoned. He gives it in the hand of Midian. Okay. First, Gideon failed to truly understand Israel's sin problem.

[24 : 29] Did you hear nothing about that prophet, Gideon? Hello? He was clueless. Well, if God was with his people, then why does he do the miracles he did for them for Egypt as the Father said?

Since God has done this, God's forsaken us. Gideon didn't understand their sin. And remember, when they were in Egypt, they had to put away the false gods? Remember that?

What's the angel of the album? What's his response? Oh, Gideon, don't be so stupid. Did you say that? Did you rebuke him? Verse 14.

Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you? I'm sending you. God could have shot him down, but he was what?

God graciously patient. He's so graciously patient with us, isn't he? I'll exchange your weakness for my own strength.

[25 : 38] Notice what Gideon says. Verse 15. Oh, Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? I'm the least. I'm the youngest. This sounds familiar. It kind of sounds like the exchange between Moses.

Remember? The burning bush. Remember that? I'm a nobody. God gave him the promise again. I am with you. You'll defeat them because God loves to use nobodies to show his great glory.

He loves to do that. He loves to come down to our level and use nobodies. He loves to do that. And notice what happens. Verse 17 to 21.

Now you see Gideon. He asked for assurance. This was God's promise to him. He wanted to know if this was truly God's word. I found a favorite site. I'm going to bring this offering.

Angel of Yogi says, I'm going to stay. So he has this offering. It's going to be that sign. And it takes time to prepare a kid. I mean, it doesn't take like a couple of minutes. It's not like a couple of hours or so. Prepares a young goat.

[26:41] Bakes unleavened bread. Food scarce at this time. He arranged it for his guests. Notice the broth and Angel of Yogi told him to pour out the broth because he would use it for pagan rituals. He tells him to pour it out.

Gideon was mixing Levitical law with pagan rituals. He was doing that. You notice it? Pour it out. Notice verse 21. Angel of Yogi puts the end of his staff, touches it, fire springs up from the rock, consumes the meat, consumes the offering, consumes the bread, then vanishes.

And Gideon's like, he's shocked. He realized the guest was the angel of Yogi and instead of assurance fortifying him, instead of his assurance that's fortifying him, now he's terrified.

I'm gonna die! Again, a Christophany. Verse 22. Alas, O Adonai, Yahweh, I've seen your face.

Yahweh, face to face. And Yahweh said to him, peace to you, do not fear, you will not die. You know, it's when, it's when we have a real sense of the great awesomeness of God, then we'll really understand his great grace.

[27:56] Understand our great sin, then you'll understand his great grace. Getting received a good dose of the awesomeness of God, and most of his grace, he didn't die.

And notice his response was worship. Look at, again, here in the text, verse 24, getting built an altar there to Yahweh, named it Yahweh Shalom. When God should be dealing on his just wrath and Israel's sin, he disciplined them, and now he's ready to deliver them.

This is amazing. Peace. Peace is only found in the one true God, in Christ Jesus. That's because God loves to come down to our level. He's graciously patient with us.

That's in the second one. Now, here's the third one. He calls us to true repentance and to fervently love him. You see in verse 25 to 35, he calls us to true repentance and to fervently love him.

He calls us to true repentance and to fervently love him. Notice what you're going to see here.

Yahweh loves to rescue his people, but he calls them to repent of their idolatry and to make him first and foremost.

[29:07] Two altars can't exist together. Mm-mm. Mm-mm. One for Yahweh and one for Baal? Uh-uh. Total opposite. A contradiction to the first commandment.

You have no other gods before me. Eh, can't do that. Take your father's bull and the second bull, verse 25. Tear down the altar of Baal. Cut down the asherah and use that wood, by the way, before the altar.

Repent. Turn away from sin. You know, God has a way to reveal heart attitude to see if we truly indeed trust him. He's gonna put him through this dire circumstance to see, okay, are you really gonna trust me now, Gideon?

I've called you. You know, you see how God does not want double-hearted followers. I mean, what wife wants a double-hearted husband?

Hmm? What husband wants a double-hearted wife? God does not want double-hearted followers, not Gideon, not Israel, and not you. Are you double-hearted?

[30:19] One writer puts it like this, quote, if Yahweh is to be their savior, Baal must go. Hmm. What does Jesus say? Matthew chapter 6?

You cannot serve two masters. You'll hate the one and love the other. Be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. So Gideon obeyed the Lord.

Verse 27. Because he was too afraid of his father's house and one of the men of the city, he did it at night. So was this sin, was this bad? Not necessarily.

God never told him to do it during the day. And God didn't tell me he wouldn't be afraid. It took great courage for him to obey the Lord to obey his command to tear this down.

It took great courage on Gideon's part. It was a big deal. Well, Yahweh told Gideon to do this and not just as an act of repentance but also give him the confidence for the main challenge that lay ahead and it's going to bolster his reputation among the tribes.

[31:30] You're going to see that in a moment. I notice he took the 10 men of his servants probably because he wasn't popular among the people of the town, not even with his own family. Everybody hated him. He was a nobody. So then you look at verses 28 to 32. This is, I think, almost comical.

Gideon's action vividly revealed Israel's heart. Comical in a sick way. I mean, think about it. Here's this guy. He's coming down with his coffee. The altar of Baal was torn down, verse 28.

Asher was beside it, cut down. Second book was offered. He's sipping his coffee. What? Who did this? A dear Asherah pole was hacked to pieces.

Somebody give me a tissue. And this uses firewood. Notice, verse 29. They said to one another, who did this thing? They searched about and inquired, hmm, maybe one of the 10 men squealed.

[32:36] I think it was Gideon, but don't tell him I told you. Notice they said to Joash, verse 30, bring out your son that he may die.

Look at what he's done to dear, our dear Baal and Asherah. Notice, their hearts were far from Yahweh.

So different from Moses. Moses, what did Moses command them in Deuteronomy chapter 13, verse 6-10? You should be put to death for your idolatry. Oh, wait a second.

Wait a minute. Who's supposed to die here? Hmm. And you see the satirical, wise, smart aleck type answer from this father.

He was sharp. Joash, verse 31, will you contend for Baal? Will you deliver him? Whoever will plead for him shall be put to death by morning.

[33:42] If he's God, let him contend for himself. If he's so awesome, if he is God, let him fight for himself since someone has pulled down his altar.

If Baal is so awesome, he don't need your help. Let him fight for himself. That's his answer. It's so funny, there's this story about John Knox who brought the Reformation to Scotland.

When he was a slave in the galleys, he was ordered to reverence a painted figure of the Virgin Mary. He threw it into the river with the comment, let our lady now save herself.

She's light enough. Let her learn to swim. This is Joash. She's like, come to you. Baal so great. If he's God, let him contend for himself.

Notice, Israel was pressed with the challenge either worship Baal or worship the one true God, Yahweh God, the Lord, was one or the other. Repentance and to fervently love him.

[34:52] God cares more about that. Look what happens, verse 32, on that day they named him Jerubbaal. Jerubbaal, what does that mean?

It means Baal contend, let Baal contend, that's what that means. It actually was a derogatory term. Oh, there goes Jerubbaal. But then, actually, the name stuck because Baal did nothing to Gideon. In other words, the name for Gideon, he was living proof that Baal was powerless and fake. He was living proof that Baal was false.

That's why he's given the name and that's why it's stuck. Which, notice what happens. Verse 33, Midianites, excuse me, Midianites and Amalekites, here they come.

The next year, here they come. But this time, verse 34, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He blew the trumpet and the Babsorets were called together to follow him. Notice what happens now.

[35:56] The tribes rally around Gideon. Now his reputation is totally changed. Everyone found out what happened. And keep in mind, don't forget, the Spirit coming upon Gideon was so that he could accomplish the task Yahweh had given him.

It's not the work of regeneration that we have in the New Covenant. It's not the work of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That's not what we're talking about here. It's for him to accomplish the task that God had given him. But look at how God used this dire situation to fulfill his plan to show their true need to repent and to love him.

Which leaves us with this last section as he calls together the different tribes, Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali, Manasseh, they came up to meet him.

You have this section here in verse 36 to 40 where you see God is graciously patient with our small faith. With our small faith, God is graciously patient with our small faith.

He doesn't snuff it out. In actuality, he blows on it to make it burn brighter. He blows on your weak faith to make it burn brighter. Gideon wanted assurance of Yahweh's promise to use him by my hand as you've spoken, he says here in verse 36.

[37:20] By my hand as you've spoken. So he presented Yahweh two tests. There's dew on the fleece only. Ground is dry.

I know you've spoken. And then the second test is even more amazing. He says, so he squeezed the water and then he says, verse 39, don't be angry with me.

One more thing. Let it now be dry on the fleece only. And the ground is dew. That's even more amazing. But the question is, was he displaying a lack of faith?

Well, one side people say, oh, he lacked faith, he was sinning. Nobody said no, he's just hesitating, was not unbelieving. And Samuel doesn't tell us anything.

He just relates the facts to us. He doesn't give us a critique, doesn't give us a commentary, which means we have to look elsewhere. Gideon is in the hall of faith, isn't he? Hebrews chapter 11. Don't forget that.

[38:17] He was a man of faith. It was weak or small faith, which God still rewards. God did not rebuke him for his two requests.

He simply acted and God graciously gave him the signs he was asking. God is graciously patient with us. That's what you see. This simply shows the patient grace of God when it comes to our small, weak faith.

He stoops down to our level and reassures us in the midst of our fears because God wants to, as one writer put it, quote, bolster our fragile faith. He wants to bolster that.

He wants to tighten our wavering grip on him. He wants to tighten your wavering grip on his word. He's graciously patient with your small faith.

He's graciously patient with mine. Yet he calls us to believe, to follow him, letting go of the idols in your life so you can be freed. You sang it.

[39:25] Oh Lord, we cast down our idols. What are the idols you have to cast down? Does he have your heart?

I mean, you see, what an amazing example of God's gracious patience to his followers who have small faith. And that's every single one of us in here.

Our faith is weak. And yet God's not going to go, oh yeah, and blow it out. Or go, he's going to blow on it so it becomes stronger.

If God gave gracious concession to Gideon's weak faith, doesn't he give you hope he's going to be gracious with yours?

Last, I'm going to leave you with this. His gracious patience is some picture of the gospel. So now, if you haven't put them on yet, take your gospel glasses and then put them on and then take the chapter and then step back and look at the chapter, the whole chapter, you'll see sin, judgment, crying out to Yahweh, rebuking, God comes down, repentance, belief.

[40:55] Do you see the gospel laid before you? Right there. You see sin? God should judge us. We cry out to Him.

And what does He do? He rebukes us. He says, you should be judged. But then what does He do? He comes down. He came down in Christ Jesus. He took on flesh. He died for sinners in our place and rose from the dead and the call is for you to repent and trust Christ.

Repent and believe. If you're here, you're not a Christian, you should repent. You should trust Christ. You should repent and believe in Jesus. Here's His gracious patience in this chapter.

It's a sum picture of the gospel. It's beautiful. God is graciously patient with our small faith. He cares more about our love for Him than having a pain-free life.

He loves to come down to our level. And He calls us to repentance and to fervently love Him. His gracious patience is a sum picture of the gospel. And if He is so graciously patient with us, shouldn't we be graciously patient with each other?

[42:13] Shouldn't we display this same gracious patience with each other? As Paul says in Colossians 3, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

We should display this within His church, amongst us as a body. Are we displaying this to each other? Let's take a moment and pray.

Let's take a moment and pray.

We're struck and amazed of Your grace, of Your patience. We're struck and amazed that You're patiently gracious, that You're graciously patient.

A night of no ma na ma