

Gideon

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[0 : 00] All right, if you would open up your Bibles to the book of Judges, in your pew Bible, it's page 242. We got some real estate that we're going to cover this morning, but I got a question for you.

For those of you who have driven, driven cars, do you know what happens when your alignment is out of whack? You're going to pull to the left or pull to the right.

Now, if your alignment to Christ is out of whack, if he's not the controlling center of your life, do you know what happens?

You're going to pull one of two ways. You're going to either pull towards a fullness of fear of others, or you're going to pull towards being full of yourself.

And we're going to see that in our next judge this morning, Gideon. Gideon embodies both a fullness of fear of other people, a ruling fear, and then we're also going to see that he becomes full of himself.

[1 : 13] But there's also a moment where we will see him full of faith. He is the next imperfect Savior who accomplishes a temporary salvation.

And if you're just joining us this morning, as we've been making way through the book of Judges, we are seeing judge after judge, imperfect after imperfect man being used by God to accomplish a temporary salvation.

And with Gideon, we go from bad to worse. This is a turning point in the book of Judges. Judges, what follows is Abimelech, and then Jephthah, and then Samson, and these guys.

It's amazing that God works at all. God's people are faithless, and yet God remains faithful. In Judges 6 through 8, there are actually four acts, like a play, acts of a play.

And each act has a number of scenes. So I'm going to walk us through at a brisk pace, but then we're going to get to a point where I'm going to ask and answer this question, what does this mean for us today?

[2 : 23] And there's going to be a warning, and there's going to be a wooing. How do we keep ourselves from being ruled by fear? How do we keep ourselves from being full of ourselves?

Full of faith in our perfect King and Savior, Jesus. So let's look at Acts 1. This is Judges 6, 1 through 10.

Act 1 has a couple scenes, and it sets the stage for the debut of Gideon. But this is more of an introduction. And scene 1 in verses 1 through 6 is something we've seen again and again.

The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, verse 1. We'll be told what that evil is in a second. And then what God responds because of his jealous anger, he loves his people.

And so what he does is he gives them over to the hand of the Midianites. And they are one of three people groups, a Canaanite coalition. The Midianites, we're going to see also the Amalekites, the people from the east.

[3 : 34] God hands them over to them, and this is what happens in verses 2 through 5. Like a swarm of locusts, these peoples come at the harvest. And what they do is they start eating up all the grain.

And it puts Israel into famine situation. It's oppressive. So they hide in the mountains. After seven years of this oppression, verse 6, Israel cries out to God.

So that's kind of scene 1 of Act 1. And then what we expect next because of the book of Judges is for God to raise up a deliverer. But there's a new development here.

In verses 7 through 10, God sends an unnamed prophet. And look what this unnamed prophet says. Thus says the Lord.

This is verse 8. The God of Israel, I led you from Egypt. And I brought you out of the house of slavery. And I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians.

[4 : 33] And from the hand of all who oppressed you. And I drove them out before you. And I gave you their land. And I said to you, I am the Lord your God. You shall not fear the gods of the Amorites and whose land you dwell.

Now, what the prophet is saying is reminding them on behalf of God of what God has done. You're my people. I have delivered you. I'm your savior and king.

Again and again. You see those eyes repeated. And the new development is, but you have not obeyed my voice.

This is just getting at this spiraling down that we see through the book of Judges of the people of Israel. I've done all this for you, but you continue to reject me.

And he points to the evil in his sight. You've taken on these other gods. The goddess of the Amorites. Baal and Esherah. So act one starts with the setting of a stage.

[5 : 40] Israel is again disobedient. What's going to happen? Instead of standing out, they blend in to the Canaanites.

It's Canaanization. Act two. And this is in verses 11 through 32 of chapter six. Gideon's debut. And Gideon debuts to mixed reviews. Scene one. It takes place in the town of Ophrah. Not to be confused with Oprah.

Ophrah. In verses 11 through 18, the angel of the Lord comes to Ophrah to call Gideon to rescue Israel from the hand of Midian.

In verses 11 and 12, we see a little tongue-in-cheek from the angel of the Lord. Because Gideon is beating out wheat. Do you see where he's beating out wheat?

[6 : 39] He's beating out in a wine press. He should be beating it out in a threshing floor. Do you know why it's in a wine press? Because he's hiding. So the angel of the Lord says, look how he addresses him.

The Lord is with you, mighty man of valor, who is beating out wheat in a wine press. It's a little tongue-in-cheek. Immediately, it starts making you wonder, who is this Gideon guy?

Gideon responds, a little sassy himself. In verse 13. And Gideon said to him, please my Lord, if the Lord is, quote-unquote, with us, why then has all this happened to us?

And where are all the, quote-unquote, wonderful deeds, quote-unquote, that our fathers recounted to us? That generation of Joshua that has now passed away. Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?

But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian. This isn't a strong start for Gideon. He is questioning God's faithfulness. He is seeing the circumstances that he's in.

[7 : 50] And he doesn't seem to recognize that what the prophet has just said, that this people has not been obeying the voice. That's why they're there in this situation.

He's blaming God instead of taking responsibility for what he's contributed to them being in this situation. God seems to ignore that in verse 14 and says, Do I not send you?

And in verse 15, Gideon kind of flips the script a little bit and kind of goes, Woe is me. What? Go?

Verse 15. How can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I'm the least in my father's house. I'm a nobody. I am of a clan of nobodies in the tribe of Manasseh.

What can you possibly do with me? This is fear. This is unbelief. This is not what one would expect.

[8 : 55] This is not a flattering picture of Gideon. So Gideon, God says to him, But I will be with you.

God doesn't rub Gideon's back and say, Oh, you have a low self-esteem. You're so special. He says, I am with you.

And Gideon seems to have a little bit of a change of heart. And then he puts God to the test. We're going to see this again. He says, He says, Show me a sign.

Show me a sign in verse 17 that it is you who speak with me. And so then he prepares a meal in verses 18 through 24. And he presents it to the angel of the Lord. And the angel of the Lord touches it with his staff.

And it's consumed by fire. And the angel of the Lord disappears. And all of a sudden, Gideon realizes he's been in the presence of God. And he says, Whoa, no! I'm going to die!

[9 : 55] I mean, this guy is on a roller coaster. And God speaks to him. Shalom. Verse 23. Peace be to you.

Do not fear. Again, it's that fear that so characterizes Gideon. You shall not die. It's quite a scene, isn't it?

Scene 2 in verses 25 through 32 is just further development of the same. God then calls Gideon to go destroy the altar of Baal and Asherah.

And what I want you to notice is whose altar it is. In verse 25, Take your father's bull and the second bull, seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has.

And cut down the Asherah that is beside it. These are the gods of the Amorites. His father, Joash, is a Baal worshiper. And God is telling him, You tear that down, and then you build an altar to me, and you present, you offer the bull to me.

[11:06] I'm your God. Gideon grabs some guys and does that. But did you notice when? Look at verse 27.

But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night. Fear. He's full of fear.

Fear. This debut is a debut of a man full of fear. The men want to know who did this. It turns out it was Gideon.

And so the men go and say to Joash, Hey, give us your son. We're going to kill him. Where's Gideon? He's Amai. Hey. His dad defends him.

Hey, if Baal wants to pick a fight, let him fight his fights, his dad says. Gideon picks up an interesting name, Jeroboam, which means the one who Baal fights against at this point.

[12:13] Both scenes, they point to this man Gideon as being full of fear. Afraid. Afraid what people will do. Afraid how people will respond if he is faithful to his God.

Now everyone in this room understands what it means to be afraid of other people. Don't we? Christians and non-Christians alike. You see, here's what's going on.

When you get God amnesia, when you forget who your God is, when Jesus ceases to be the controlling center of your life, you are going to pull.

You're out of alignment. And so here we see a man being pulled to being afraid of other people, being a fearful man. Now if you're in the room and you're not a Christian, here's what you need to know.

Maybe you're thinking about becoming a Christian. You're going to need to lay down what other people think about you in order to be a follower of Jesus.

[13:15] You need to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him. Act 2 here is the debut of Gideon and he's full of fear.

So let's move to Act 3. Gideon's divine transformation. Because there's a divine intervention.

He goes from being full of fear to being full of faith. Just look at 7.15 real quick. Two words. He worshipped.

He worshipped. Let's see what happens. The first scene is in verses 33-35. There's this drawing of the battle together. We have the Canaanite coalition, the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the people of the east.

We know from chapter 8, this is 135,000 men. 135. Kenosha and some change. And we also see that Gideon is there and he has a group of a partial coalition of Israel.

[14:26] Not all of the tribes, just part of them. It just kind of goes to the disunity happening among the nation. Manasseh, verse 35, Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali.

But the thing that you need to know, the X factor. Oh, by the way, there's only 22, no, 32,000 of the Israelite soldiers.

135,000. 32,000. The X factor, of course, is this spirit of the Lord who clothes Gideon.

Scene 2, 36-40. Gideon is very aware of the numbers. And then he goes into the whole fleecing incident.

Do you remember this? God has told him, go, I'm sending you, I'm with you. It's a command and a promise. And Gideon, he balks.

[15:40] Notice, it starts with an if. 36, If you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said. If, though, I need more proof.

This isn't obedience. This is balking. This is a waffling. This is a man, again, showing his fear. He's not trusting the Lord, but testing the Lord.

And so he says, hey, I'm going to lay out a fleece of wool, and when I wake up, hey, if it's packed with water, then I'll know it's you. And God does it.

Verse 38, it was so. And so you think he's going to go out in battle, right? No. Look what he does. He's like, then Gideon said to God, let not your anger burn against me. Let me just speak one more thing. Could you just do it again? Just this time, keep the fleece dry and all the ground wet around it. And God does it. It's so. You know what this points to? [16:42] If you are a Christian who are putting out fleeces to God, the intention's great. You see it in your Bible, right? But the actual thing going on here is unbelief.

This is not an example to emulate. This is Gideon in fear putting God to the test. And yet God, he's so merciful, he does it, but I've got to be honest with you.

God's got something else rolling. who's fleecing who? Check out what happens next. So you think coming out of this, Gideon's like, okay, let's go to the battlefield.

But we know that he's a little iffy. And then, this happens. Look at verse chapter 7. This is scene 3. God exposes Gideon's fear. Just imagine if you're Gideon. Knowing what you know about his givenness to fear, check it out. The day arrives, verse 1.

[17:52] They're getting ready for battle. In verse 2, God says, wait, time out. You know what, Gideon? They got 135,000. We've got 32 grand. I'll tell you what, we just got too many.

Too many. If you're Gideon, what's going on in you at this point? You're having your fears exposed is what's going on. And so, God, he says, if anybody's afraid, let them go home.

It's actually out of Deuteronomy 20 where God makes this provision to all of Israel's armies that if there's any soldier, they're afraid they go home because they don't want fear spreading among the ranks.

Do you know what the irony is? Jeroboam is afraid. Gideon is afraid. So, 22,000 say, I'm afraid. I'm out of here. Leaving 10 grand left. And so, now we've gone from 135k against 10k. And then, verses 4 through 8 happens.

[18:58] the people are still too many. We got too many. And so, with a kind of a drinking of the water test, God winnows his troops down from 10,000 to 300.

135,000 against 300. Now, the question is, why? Why? What is going on here?

Two reasons. Look at verse 2. God says to Gideon, that first drawdown, the people with you are too many for me to give the Midians into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, my own hand has saved me.

See what's going on there? God's saying, all glory goes to me. I'm winnowing the troops down, so there's no question who's going to win this victory. It's going to be me.

Do you see it? The other reason why is to expose Gideon's fear. Gideon came out of the fleece incident thinking, okay, and now God just pulls the fleece right out from underneath him.

[20:16] You're going to have to trust me, Gideon. In scene 4, in verses 9 through 18, God not only addresses Gideon's fear, he encourages him.

Verse 9, chapter 7, that same night, the Lord said to him, arise, go down against the camp, for I have given them into your hand. Wait, but Gideon, 10. But, but if you're afraid to go down, God knows Gideon.

God knows you. But if you're afraid, you can take a buddy. You can bring a friend, your servant, Purah, and when you go down there, listen to what they say.

And so they get down to the camp, and verse 13, there is this Midianite soldier on duty, and look what he says. He shares a dream that he has.

Behold, I dreamed a dream. And behold, a cake of barley bread, not, not the most imposing feature, a loaf of bread. A cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so, that it fell, and turned it upside down, so that the tent lay flat.

[21:43] He's obviously kind of upset about this. And then this other Midianite soldier gives the interpretation of the dream, to which he says, this is no other than the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel.

God has given into his hand Midian and all the camp. This is God encouraging Gideon. You know what's amazing about this?

God has personally spoken to Gideon. God has used an angel of the Lord to speak to Gideon. God has sent a prophet raising up issues.

And it's only when it comes from the mouth of two Midianite soldiers that Gideon believes. Verse 15, as soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream in its interpretation, he worshiped.

Here's a man full of faith all of a sudden. His fears have been transformed into faith. God has intervened mercifully, graciously.

[22 : 58] He's exposed the fear and then encouraged him in the fear. He's come out of this thinking, God is at work. And then when you look down at what happens next, he rallies his troops.

He blows the shofar. He, troops, come on together. All 300 of you. Breaks them into three divisions, gives them some strange instructions, and then he's like, follow me. He's a man clothed by the Spirit.

But what happens next, in verses 19 through 25, is actually the battle.

Gideon's 300, this is nighttime, they surround the Valley of Jezreel, they surround the camp of 135,000. And Gideon blows his shofar.

And everybody else. And then they smash the jars, and there's a torch inside. And so all of a sudden, there's light shining. And so in the middle of the night, Gideon has surrounded this huge army, and now they are kind of making this incredible sound.

[24 : 11] And all of a sudden, there's these lights all around them, and God uses it to set this Canaanite coalition into great confusion. They draw their swords, and they start killing each other.

Do you know what's in the hands of Gideon's 300? Not swords. A shofar, a trumpet, and a lamp. God routes this 135,000 people, and it doesn't look like this 300 draws a sword on the battlefield. It's an incredible win for God. They put this army on the run. They call in the other 10,000, Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh.

They're like, hey, let's go get them. So they all go and get them. Gideon texts his friends in Ephraim and say, hey, we got them on the run. Let's go.

[25 : 15] So the Ephraim army joins in. The Ephraim army, they track down two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeb.

They capture them, kill them, bring their heads back to Gideon. It's gruesome. God's got the victory. Who's the hero?

God's the hero. God has not just beaten 135,000 with shofars and lamps. He has seemingly beaten Gideon's fearful heart.

Which brings us into Act 4. We've gone now from Gideon's debut, a mixed review, a man full of fear, to Gideon's transformation, divine intervention.

He's a man full of faith. And now, Gideon's demise. There's something new about him we're going to see. He's full of something, for sure.

[26 : 22] Let's see what it is. Scene 1, chapter 8, verses 1 through 3. The Ephraimites take issue with Gideon and they're saying, hey man, what's your problem?

Why didn't you call us in when you were getting in the battle? And what Gideon does, it's not fear of people here. He does something else. Verse 2, what have I done now in comparison with you? Look down at verse 3. What have I been able to do in comparison with you, Ephraim? You know what that is? Flattery.

He's manipulating them. He's not afraid, he's flattering. The next scene is in verses, starts in verse 4.

Gideon is now chasing two kings, not princes, kings of Midian, Ziba and Zalmunna, and he's crossed the Jordan and he's got a tired bunch of dudes.

[27 : 34] And so he goes to the men of Succoth and then he's going to go to the men of Penuel and he's going to ask for some kind of refreshment for his guys. And the men of Succoth, in verse 5, they say to him, well he says to them, please give loaves of bread.

My dudes are exhausted. And the officials of Succoth in verse 6 say, are the hands of Ziba and Zalmunna already in your hand that we should give bread to your army? In other words, Gideon, I think you're counting your chickens before they're hatched.

I don't see any king with you. They're intentionally not participating. It would have made anybody mad. And then the people of Penuel do the same thing.

He said to the men of Penuel, well, verse 8, they answer to him the same way as the men of Succoth and with both of them he threatens them. There's going to be some consequences to this, guys.

I've got to go chase these kings. And what we see is this threateningness happening. He's not afraid of them. Something's changed in Gideon.

[28 : 41] He's full of something. It's going to become clearer as we go. Scene 3, verses 10-12. Gideon and his boys catch up to the kings, Ziba and Zalmunna.

They capture them. And then the next scene is they bring them back. They bring them back to the men of Succoth, the men of Penuel.

And he says in verse 15, Behold Ziba and Zalmunna, men of Succoth, about whom you taunted me, saying, Are the hands of Ziba and Zalmunna already in your hand that we should give bread to you men who are exhausted?

And then he takes those 77 leaders of Succoth and he whips them publicly. It's vindictive. It's really harsh.

It's almost something a king would do. A Canaanite king. And then, with the men of Penuel, he breaks down the tower just like he said, and he kills the men of the city.

[29 : 51] He kills, by the way, these are other Israelites. This is over the top. He's being harsh. And if that's not enough, the next scene, scene 5, verses 18-21, now he's with these two kings.

And he says, Hey, where are these people? Where are the men that you killed at Mount Tabor? And they're like, well, they're dead. In verse 19, he says, They were my brothers, the sons of my mother, as the Lord lives.

He's swearing, by God, if you didn't do that, I would have let you live. And then he tells his son to gut him. His son doesn't. So he does.

Gideon kills them. And you're left saying, this was personal. This was vengeance. This was Gideon taking vengeance for what these men did to his relatives.

This is not something this man should have done. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. But it gets worse.

[31 : 14] The next scene, in verses 22-28, the men of Israel said to Gideon, Rule over us.

Be our king. You and your son and your grandson. Let's set up a dynasty. For you have saved us from the hand of Midian.

Be our king. And then, in verse 23, Gideon gives the right answer. I will not rule over you and my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.

Sounds great. But here's the thing. Gideon's actions show otherwise. Because what we see next is this. And then Gideon said to them, Let me make a request of you.

A request. And then he has them all give one of the gold earrings of all of the men that they have killed. And what it amounts to is a huge amount of gold.

[32 : 19] 43 pounds. 1.3 million dollars on today's market. And with that, he makes an ephod. It's probably an image.

Brings it back to his hometown. Not Oprah. Ophrah. And look what happens in verse 27.

All Israel whored after it there and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family. Remember what happened in Ophrah to begin with? Baal. False worship.

And now there's false worship again. Goes from bad to worse. There's one more thing I want to point out and then we'll bring this thing to bear.

It happens in verses 29 through 32. Gideon, we're told in verse 30, has 70 sons.

[33 : 19] Seven zero sons. I know what you're wondering. How can one woman bear 70 sons? That's impossible. Yes, it is.

And the reason why he's had 70 sons is because he's had many wives. Verse 30. This was forbidden of the kings just generally.

One man, one woman for life and marriage. But of the kings of Israel. They weren't to have multiple wives. Deuteronomy 17, 17.

Lest one turns his heart from the Lord. And verse 31, his concubine who was in Shechem, she was a Canaanite. She bears him a son and calls his name Abimelech.

Great name. Until you know what it means. You know what it means? My dad is king. My father is king.

[34 : 20] Gideon names his son my father is king. The same Gideon who says, I will not rule over you but the Lord will rule over you. No.

You know what he's full of? He's not full of fear. He's not full of faith. He's full of himself.

God, this is pride. All of this flattery, all of this harshness, all of this vindictiveness, all this taxing and creating an image for people to worship, to think of yourself as a king when you're not.

He's pretending to be a king. It's all pride. He's gone from being full of fear to full of faith to full of pride. You know what I think happened?

This is speculation. Remember verse 22, rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also for you have saved us from the hand of Midian.

[35 : 28] I think he believed it. I think he believed it. The very thing that God said he's going to winnow his army down so that no one would question who saved Israel from Midian.

Oh man. Gideon's demise is that he's full of himself. This is pride. In Gideon, we see the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The good. He worshipped. He obeyed at some point. I mean, he is in Hebrews 11 hall of faith. But we see the bad not just he's full of fear.

God repeatedly speaks to him in his fear again and again. I'm with you. I'm sending you. The Lord is with you. The ugly is he's full of himself.

You know what happens in chapter 8? God never speaks once. God's speaking all over the place in 6 and 7 addressing his fear but God doesn't speak once in his pride.

[36 : 39] God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Gideon is an imperfect savior.

A pretend king. And God uses him still to accomplish a temporary salvation. But you know who the real hero is? God.

Yahweh. The one who calls Gideon. The one who exposes Gideon's fear. The one who encourages Gideon. The one who miraculously delivers Israel from the Midianites with just 300 and no swords drawn.

This God who delivered Israel from Midian he took on flesh. he became a man and walked among us.

He lived a perfect life that none of us could ever live and then he died on the cross in the place of sinners for our being held in the grip of the fear of man for being held in the very hand of being full of ourselves.

[37 : 44] He delivered us from that. He's no other than Jesus Christ. The greatest hero of all.

Jesus is the perfect Savior who has accomplished a permanent salvation. Just think of Gideon. Full of fear.

Folded like a cheap suit. Did things in the dark. Think about Jesus. Fearless. Matthew 4 standing before the devil himself contending resisting not backing down not shrinking back pressing in.

Think of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate. He doesn't back down. He stands his ground. Think of Jesus Matthew 27 when he's nailed to the cross he does so willingly.

not hiding not asking for signs fearlessly doing the will of his father and he's doing that today and tomorrow and forever.

[39 : 00] He's totally God totally man and he's alive today. The other thing about about Gideon is that he was full of himself. Jesus was anything but he humbled himself.

Listen to Philippians chapter 2. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was born what was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of man and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even to death on a cross.

He's the perfect king. He wasn't full of himself he humbled himself to accomplish a perfect salvation a forever salvation not the chapter 8 verse 28 for 40 years for forever years.

You know what that means? Jesus is the perfect savior the true king the rightful king the forever king. who accomplished our salvation forever.

So we can say by your hand you have saved us from ourselves. What does this mean for us?

[40 : 30] The warning is this for those of us in the room who are prone to be full to be full of fear rules you keeps you up at night it's a temptation common to man do you know what you're being called to do?

Instead of hide and be silent and exercise false humility you're to confess that to the Lord you're to repent of that that has no place in ruling your heart when Jesus is the controlling center of your heart of your being it's this fear of others that needs to be confessed and repented of.

The other side of this is being full of yourself pride being a flatterer being a manipulator seeking vengeance when that belongs to the Lord you need to confess your pride you need to repent of your pride turn from it Gideon didn't when you forget your God when you have this God amnesia

when you forget that Jesus is the controlling center of your life you will either be a man fearer or revere yourself so how do we keep from doing that?

Here's the wooing Jesus is the treasure of your heart fullness of faith in Jesus and when you are trusting in Jesus and he's the controlling center of your life these other things get crowded out daily remind yourself of him daily thank him for what he's done in you what he's doing and when you do these stir longings in your heart for your king and they put to death fear of man fullness of yourself there's a warning and a wooing we must heed which way do you pull?

do you pull? do you pull towards fearing what people think about you? or do you pull towards being full of yourself? we see both in Gideon and what we see in Jesus is the only way forward fullness of faith in our perfect savior and king Jesus the ultimate deliverer let's pray together God we thank you for the example of Gideon we see how he did model faith to some degree but we also heed his example fearing man being full of himself and God we turn from that that is not who we want to be that's not who you've called us to be God would you fill us clothe us by your spirit so that we would walk in the victory you have won in Jesus name we pray amen you