

# I Will Be With You

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[ 0 : 00 ] As we come to the word of the Lord, let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you that it was written thousands of years ago, yet still penetrates our hearts and our souls.

We pray that your spirit is our teacher and our director. Fill our hearts with encouragement of the saving work that your son has done on the cross.

We pray that all glory is ascribed to you in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Have you ever been overwhelmed?

It may be nothing emotionally draining, but yet just the sheer scale of practical tasks set before you. Or there might be something currently or recently that seems overwhelming, tiring and stressful in your life.

Whatever it may be, or even if everything has been free and easy, there's always a chance that some life circumstance will change that leads to a situation like that.

[ 1 : 10 ] Let's look tonight at a character study of Gideon and see what answers lie within the passage, which you never know, might speak into what you're going through or what you could go through in this ever-changing life.

We could spend multiple Sundays exhaustively looking at this topic. But in this one-off sermon, we will focus on three points.

First, God equips the unlikely. Second, God saves. And third, and this does come with a spoiler alert, Gideon fails.

Christ prevails. First, God equips the unlikely. We've set the general background of Judges, but what of Gideon and his immediate community that he lives in?

As said, the book of Judges, along with a vast majority of what is still to come from the Old Testament, can be summed up in the phrase from Judges 2, 11, after the death of Joshua, the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

[ 2 : 28 ] However, there is hinted in this text an opportunity for this not to have been the immediate result here. There has just been a circuit breaker in the spiritual well-being of Israel.

They've just had rest and peace for 40 years after Deborah and Barak judged the land. Chapter 5 is a song of worship about God's deliverance, and verse 31 finishes with, But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might, reflecting Israel.

This is an opportunity to break this cycle that we've seen in Judges. This can be seen in the most minute of details in the text. In chapters 3, 12, and 4, 1, the language used was, And again they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Like, there's an inevitability. But here in chapter 6, the text says, The people of Israel did, not again, did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.

The potential for a new era of Yahweh worship and perpetual relative peace was not taken up by the people of Israel.

[ 3 : 52 ] They, even in the face of God's great blessing, still turned to their own design and living on their own terms. But that should not be a moment to say, O bad Israelites, because who here doesn't come and hear the wonders of God's kingdom every Sunday, but yet in the weak, fall into sin.

Let it be a warning for us, not an opportunity for pride. This, again, is the Israel of Gideon's day, even Gideon's very own house.

If we look at verse 13, Gideon speaks of how his fathers recounted wonderful deeds of God. But by verse 25, his father looks like he's changed from an elder who speaks the word of the Lord to that of a priest of Baal with an altar residing in his own property.

Along with the severe reaction of the people, in verse 30, it's likely that that was a worship center. What then of Gideon the man?

His story is significant. By verses alone, it's the longest story within Judges. Along with the fact that there's so much direct communication that exists in the narrative between Gideon and God.

[ 5 : 21 ] However, his story does have a humble start. He's a result of nature and nurture. His nature being that of a fallen man.

His nurture being raised in a family of idol worship and in a society that faced seven years of war. Not even war, but almost annihilation.

Gideon is our unlikely hero. When we see his introduction, alarm bells might sound. Is this our hero? We ask. When I think of unlikely heroes, the first thing that jumps to my mind is the hobbits of the Lord of the Rings.

They are so small in stature and so insignificant in the world in which they inhabit. Yet they are key characters in that land's redemption arc.

There's something that draws us to those stories. And I don't think it's merely a desire for the underdog. But the understanding that it reflects biblical storylines.

[ 6 : 28 ] God chooses and equips the unlikely and God is glorified in their and in our weaknesses. Back to Gideon.

We find Gideon in a winepress verse 11 to hide the little grain he has from the Midianites. As in chapter 6 verses 1 through 7 we hear of the Midianites devouring all the Israelites have like locusts. So Gideon is hiding beating his grain underground. Normally this task would be done outside. You'd throw up the grain and the wind would take away the chaff.

If you were to close your eyes you might even be able to viscerally see and feel that chaff filled air filling Gideon's lungs. Is this hiding man going to be the unlikely hero that saves Israel?

Then we come to the heart of Gideon's story and his call. You've heard of a character arc. With Gideon it's more like a character arch.

[ 7 : 39 ] You must go up and it's going to go down. The angel of the Lord appears to Gideon in verse 12. The Lord is with you almighty man of valour.

Gideon is incensed. responding by questioning God's will and his goodness and allowing the oppression of the Midianites. Then things go on to escalate.

The Lord is not put off by Gideon's impudence. He has work to do with him. Look at the text verse 14 but the Lord turned to him.

Save Israel did I not send you. Gideon's bravado crumbles. Is this truly a real prophet?

What have I said? His response changes from impudence to fear. His response resembles the excuses made by Saul in 1 Samuel 9.21 when he's being approached to be king and Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3.11 when he's being asked to rescue their Israelites.

[ 8 : 56 ] Verse 15 in chapter 6 my clan is the weakest and I am the least. God is untroubled by this.

It's not a problem if Gideon has a low opinion of his stature. This is the kind of man God can work with after all. 2 Corinthians 12 9 But he said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Philippians 4.13 I can do all things through him that strengthens me.

In the next section God calls Gideon to action. He calls him to make a stand against idolatry against his family by taking and his people by taking down the altar that resides in his father's house.

Then using the stones and the wood of those altars to sacrifice to Yahweh instead. He then when he succeeds in this is given the name Jerubbabel meaning let Baal contend against him verse 32.

[ 10 : 22 ] After this the Lord does confirm his call and equips him in verse 34 by the spirit of the Lord clothing Gideon.

Now Gideon has changed vastly in a short period of time. Now with this divine empowerment he calls Israel to him and can stand for the Lord on the battlefield.

He's also held up in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 32 along with the likes of Abraham and Moses. It should not be a surprise that God uses and chooses to equip the unlikely. It's a beautiful truth though that should bring hope.

Does this not encourage us? Would we not see ourselves as unlikely instruments to be used by God? But he calls us and he equips us.

[ 11 : 25 ] Yes, not to be a judge of Israel but to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength and to love your neighbours as yourself.

How? God gives us the same spirit of Jesus that empowered Gideon. Praise the Lord for his spirit that helps us to be changed to become more like Christ.

So, God equips the unlikely. What about God saving? Let's pick up where we left in Gideon's call. Our second point. God saves. Looking at verse 16. God is consistent. And the Lord said to him, but I will be with you and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.

This verse holds these three chapters together. No matter what attitude and loyalty man has towards God, whether in the good or in the bad, God is consistent, his steadfast love never has been and never will change towards his people.

[ 12 : 46 ] I will be with you. The angel of the Lord appeared in the interaction with Gideon back in verse 12.

The Lord, Yahweh, the covenantal name of the Lord is with you. Then in verse 16, I will be with you. God then saves Gideon from his own fear.

After realising who he's speaking to and fearing immediate death, God speaks to him gently in verse 23. Peace be to you.

Do not fear. You shall not die. It's not a passing comment. This piece is tangible. My father spoke of that piece on Wednesday.

It's a grace given by God. Psalm 29 11. May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace.

[ 13 : 49 ] Isaiah 26 3. You keep him in perfect peace with whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26 12.

O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done this for all us and all our works. John 14 27.

Jesus speaking, Peace I leave you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

And 2 Thessalonians 3 16. Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and every way the Lord be with you all.

He is the God of peace. And that time and moment Gideon knew it. One commentator says, Now God is everything and Gideon is nothing except a profoundly grateful human being in the midst of war and devastation, anger, frustration, self-doubt and threatening future, which is still there, he has peace.

[ 15 : 13 ] Gideon will save, sorry, God will save his people militarily out of their distress. But first, he cares for Gideon and he saves him from his fear.

Is this not important for us? We being followers of God, this same God who set his love upon us. And I will never tire of making this point. He is the same God, the same God we read here, saving the Israelites, is our same God and King.

Let us in our distress turn to God in prayer, a God who inclines his ear to us and asks for the peace of God to be lavished upon us when we are a father who loves giving good gifts.

Matthew 7 11, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him. Gideon is saved from his fear and builds an altar named that the Lord is peace.

God is promised to save by his hand. Where else in this Gideon narrative is the concept of God saving most prominent.

[ 16 : 31 ] Gideon then goes on to test God in verses 36 through 40 but he says in verse 36 if you save Israel by my hand as you have said finally Gideon has clicked God saves through Gideon being his earthly agent on this occasion.

In 2018 Hannah and I with the assistance of our loving families bought the house that we now live in. But to buy a house we had to have a letter saying that the bank would front us 90% of the cost of our home.

Even though we did buy our house and if we fill in any insurance document we will tick the box owned with a mortgage. In reality we didn't the bank did.

The people selling us their house didn't trust us to buy it but the bank that they had the financial clout to prop up the deal. Gideon looked like he bought the house.

He was the military general who would stand on the battlefield and lead the Israelites to victory. But in reality God bought the metaphorical house.

[ 17 : 58 ] It was his vast almighty power that would win the day for Gideon and the Israelites. In chapter 7 verse 2 says the Lord said to Gideon the people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand lest Israel boast over me saying my own hand has saved me.

We found out in verse 3 of that same chapter that Gideon's manpower was almost 32,000 men. However, in verse 12 in that same chapter we hear the composition of the enemy force reading verse 12 God would still be a miraculous victory for God showing showing that God saves but with man there is always the opportunity for boasting.

In the 1980s a study was conducted to try and understand the mentality of drivers regarding road accidents. There were 520 participants.

They were all asked to self assess their driving ability. only 5 of the 520 said that they were worse than average.

Less than 1%. With some saying they are as good but most saying they are a lot better than other drivers. It is described in this article as mass delusion that rendered them blind to their own failings and at greater risk of road accidents.

[ 20 : 00 ] Also in the research for this part of the sermon I read an article that spoke of how to promote yourself on social media by staying on that fine line before boasting.

Humans have a natural inclination to boast and their Israelites are no different. It cannot come to pass that that idolatrous Israelite nation take their esteem for God's victory for themselves.

How then is this stopped? To offset that outcome God reduces the fighting force down to 22,000 and then down again to 300 making it beyond any doubt that it is God who saves and it will be God's victory.

Then God wins the battle for Gideon chapter 7 verse 22 when they blew the 300 trumpets the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army the Lord set every man against each other as Gideon predicts in verse 2 God saves he says he'll save he will and he does so God has chosen the unlikely in Gideon and we take solace in that then God saves we have insurance in that everything seems to be going well okay our hero still remains unlikely but there's faith there's growth and God's victory what about our third point Gideon fails Christ prevails if you're anything like me

I am not a fan of a film that ends badly for everyone there's no closure two that jump to mind are Troy and the perfect storm showing a bit of my film knowledge for various reasons and I won't spoil them everything ends on a sad note this is much like Gideon's story here where does Gideon's story go awry first he's gone from a humble faithful warrior into a savage general in chapter 7 24 he calls for the rest of Israel to arms to rout the Midianites but he comes to two bordering towns Succoth and Peniel the men of these towns decide against assisting in the campaign because if it goes wrong they are very much in the firing line Gideon curses them and after capturing the [ 22 : 54 ] Midianite kings he returns to serve his form of justice in verses 16 and 17 he flogs the men of Succoth but goes further to execute capital punishment on all the men of Peniel Gideon's leadership is fracturing Israel not uniting it together it's also seen in the fact that even though Gideon acts correctly and rejecting the offer of kingship from his people in chapter 8 verse 23 Gideon said to them then I will not rule over you and my son will not rule over you the Lord will rule over you then just after one of the best moments comes his fall in drastic contrast the Gideon of chapter 6 24 goes from making an altar to God's praise but here all the praise and adulation is reserved for

Gideon himself he commands a gold tribute from his people in verse 24 then erects a golden ephod a statue to his stature placed prominently in his city like other idols before it becomes a case of heart worship for Gideon and his family verse 27 also he has rejected kinship but in the text is very clear he goes on to very much live like Israelite kings he has many wives and at least one concubine that concubine he has a bimelech whose name means son of the king Gideon dies just like Gideon a story of kindling faithfulness that wanes the people after he dies as a whole who are after the battles once again making them their gods and forgetting their one and only true god chapter 8 verse 33 now the point in this is not to say

Gideon is written off as we've noted earlier he is in the hall of faith within Hebrews he is a man but he is a flawed man at points he did better than others he led Israel and they did experience rest for 40 years the point in this section is not to do what the Old Testament does as a whole and pointing us to Christ especially at this point of time looking forward to the Messiah where Gideon failed living like a king Christ prevailed when he was in the desert overcoming temptations he was offered

everything he could see but he resisted the devil's offer when Gideon felt wronged by the people of Succoth and Peniel he failed lashing out in anger when Christ was wronged in the garden and Peter struck out in violence against a servant

Jesus said in Luke 22 51 no more of this and he touched his ear and healed him Gideon failed Christ prevailed in love when Gideon died all the people returned to their idolatry and didn't care for his family when Christ died he reconciled and elect from every generation to eternal life Romans 5 verse 6 Romans 5 15 but the free gift is not like the trespass for if many died through one man's trespass much more have the grace of God by the free gift by grace that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many Romans 14 15 for to this end Christ died and lived again that he might be the Lord of both the dead and of the living Gideon failed Christ prevailed this is your hope if you follow Jesus Christ Christ is your Lord and Savior friend and brother he has died for you you are secure he has prevailed to save the elect of which you're among is Christ Jesus your Savior go away from this place with thankfulness and joy in your heart tonight Christ has prevailed if you're here though and have never heard about Christ before or if you heard about him all your life not giving your life to him hear this Christ has prevailed you are here tonight for this purpose hear the love of God for you if you have clicked onto YouTube today it is for this purpose hear the love of

[ 28 : 09 ] God for you today give your life to Christ now do not wait a moment longer that thankfulness and joy that we share can be yours too as Christ has prevailed for you God equips the unlikely just as well as we are all unlikely God saves everyone he has intended to save he did and he will praise God Gideon failed we fail but there is good news because Christ prevailed amen and bless that word to us let's turn to that saving God in prayer we thank you Lord that you are a God who saves his people who set his love upon us we pray for the people of Glasgow to hear your gospel to turn to you so that more voices are praising your name we know that we fail we know that Gideon failed we are so thankful that Christ prevailed and always will prevail because he did we pray that you are glorified because you are all glorious and worthy of all glory honour and praise in Jesus Christ name amen