

The Battle Is The Lord's

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 January 2024

Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] So a wonderful story, isn't it? It's one of my favorites, and I can remember learning this one so early in my life in Sunday school, and perhaps you can remember it as well. Maybe some of you, this is the first time you've ever really come across this narrative before in the Bible, and it's just fascinating. It's one of those stories that's fascinating to learn about. It's so interesting to picture and to ponder in our minds, but it's so very important for us to understand the theological truths that are here, and that's what we want to try to do this morning.

Remember the Gideon cycle, it begins in chapter 6, where we're told that the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. That phrase in the book of Judges always has to do with bell worship and the things that would come along with that, of course. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. Now this is one of the shortest periods of oppression that we read about in the book of Judges, but at the same time it might be the most difficult and devastating season of oppression that Israel actually faced. Because of Israel's idolatry, God strengthened and allowed this coalition of semi-nomadic tribes that was led by Midian. It included the Amalekites and the people of the east as well. This giant coalition of nomadic tribes. God strengthens them, and God allows them for seven years in a row annually to come into the land of Israel, specifically to the valley of Jezreel, and they left utter devastation in its wake. The people of Israel would not stay in their homes.

They had to leave their homes. They would run, and they made caves in the mountains that they would basically hide out in until this coalition left and went back east. And they're often described in the story as locusts, not just as a description of their immeasurable number, but particularly because of the devastation they left behind. They came in exactly like locusts that would fly in in a season of harvest and devour everything of substance that's there. And that's exactly what the Midianites were doing. They were taking all of the food from Israel. They were taking all of the livestock from Israel. And this was probably the hardest seven years that we read about in the book of Judges.

Now, in most cases, it takes Israel sometimes decades of oppression before they actually cry out to God.

20, 30 years, maybe 40 in some cases. The suffering under Midian was such that it only takes them seven years. Seven years, the shortest time frame we read about. It's so hard. They know that they will not survive unless God steps in and does something on there. Perhaps. So they cry out to the Lord and God, his faith wasn't he. He's gracious to raise up and empower this man, Gideon, who becomes his chosen deliverer. And it's in verse one of chapter seven that we learn and begin to understand what this whole conflict is really about. Look at verse one again. Then Jerobel, that is Gideon, and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Herod. And the camp of Midian was north of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley. So you don't necessarily have to read chapter six to know what's happening here. There is an enemy. They are camped near the Mount Moreh. They're in the valley of Jezreel. There's a lot of them. And then there's Gideon, and he's got his men, and they're just above, and they're looking down. We can see there is a fight that is about to take place. That's what the author is setting us up for. But he uses a term here that helps us understand really what it's about.

[3 : 58] He starts with a different name for Gideon. That is the name Jerobel. And it's very unusual for the author to do this. Typically, even in the rest of chapter seven, he's going to call him Gideon. That's his common name. But at the beginning, he doesn't do that. Why? Why does he call him Jerobel?

Well, if you remember, the name means, if you look back at chapter six, I think somewhere around verse, let's see, verse 32. It means, let Baal contend against him. That's what the name means.

It's a nickname. It was given to him by the people of his own town because in obedience to the Lord, Gideon overnight one night took some servants, and he destroyed and beat down the altar that was set up to Baal and the Asherah that was beside it. He destroyed their pagan worship, or at least the shrine of their pagan worship. And he pounded it down, he broke it down, and then he built an altar to Yahweh in its place, and he sacrificed a bull in its place. Well, the people of the town, they're so incensed by this, they want to kill him. Remember, Gideon's dad steps up for him on his behalf. He basically saves his life. And what the people do is they assign this nickname for Gideon, Jerobel. Let Baal contend against him. It was something of a curse against him. Essentially, the people were saying, okay, we're going to trust that Baal, the God we really want, the God we really want to serve, that he's going to destroy you for what you've just done to his altar. And so they're going to watch. They're going to watch and let Baal contend against Gideon. Now, interestingly, the author uses Jerobel instead of Gideon to start the narrative. And the purpose of that is to remind us what this whole scene is actually about. In the end, this chapter is not about Israel's conflict with Midian. It's about God's conflict against Baal worship among his people. That's what this is really about. Even the battle itself is not so much about God fighting against Midian as much as that it is about God fighting for Israel. He's wooing them. He's proving himself again to them. And once again, he's proving his faithfulness to his faithless chosen so that he might bring them back to love and obedience and worship of him. Okay. That's what this is really about. It's not about Midian. It's about Baal. It's about the Lord God winning his people back to himself. That's what this is. Well, the focus of our text is on the actual battle between Midian's massive army and Gideon's meager 300. But the message of the text is actually quite simple. The message is this.

The battle belongs to the Lord. The battle is the Lord's. Therefore, all the glory is the Lord's as well. All the glory. He is sovereign over every detail that unfolds in this chapter. And that is something that should motivate our worship. It should strengthen our hearts and it should lead to us giving him glory. There's three things that God does in this battle. The first thing that he does is he reduces the army. He reduces the army. Surprisingly, this is the first thing that he does in preparing Gideon for the battle is he reduces the army to almost nothing, which is ironic, isn't it? Because if you look back at chapter six again, particularly verses 34 and 35, it says that the spirit of God clothed Gideon for the purpose of gathering these men. Do you remember that? After that whole episode with the altar of Baal, it says that God clothed Gideon with his spirit so that Gideon would have this divinely empowered mission to gather men for the battle. And now we find God is actually taking all these men away. So something formerly meant to give Gideon confidence is now removed by the Lord intentionally. And God used two different methods to actually do this. The first one was he sent the fearful home. Look at verse three. Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people saying, whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gideon. 22,000 of the people return. Only 10,000 remain. Deuteronomy chapter 20, it provides certain provisions for some men who did not have to go to battle. And in most cases, the provisions had to do with the circumstances of their life. For example, if a young man had betrothed a woman to be his wife, but had not yet married her, he was exempted from calls to battle. And the purpose of that was so that he could establish his marriage and his family and continue his family's name rather than go to war, die, and let somebody else do it.

[9 : 26] Right? Okay, so, and there are several different provisions that God made for the people. One provision actually brought tremendous shame. The others were excusable. One brought tremendous shame. And it was that anyone who was fearful of the battle could not remain and fight. They had to go home. Now, it's not that some people just aren't afraid to fight. That's not what we're talking. We're talking about those who are melting in fear, who are trembling in fear. And the reason for that provision was because fear spreads like gangrene. If you got one person who's just scared to death of what's happening, that's going to cause a lot of other people to start to be a little afraid themselves. And it can be devastating to an army.

So God makes this provision. If people are just completely afraid, don't let them go to the battle. Now, whether or not God is doing that in this instance, I don't know. I don't think so. It could just be that God wants Gideon to see exactly how much fear is out there among his own men. In any case, fear is a major theme of this story. Fear and its effects on our faith. And throughout the Gideon narrative, we see it over and over again. And it's going to come into play in a major way with the Midianites in just a moment. And in the end of this, 22,000 of the 32,000 left. How devastating that is. You got 32,000 men, two-thirds of them leave like that. Well, God wasn't finished dwindling the

army. There was still more to reduce it now. Look at verse four. The Lord said to Gideon, the people are still too many. Take them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Anyone of whom I say to you, this one shall go with you, shall go with you. Anyone of whom I say, this one shall not go with you, shall not go. So he brought the people to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, you shall set him by himself. Now this next phrase, this is a clarifying statement on the first one.

This is not a second condition. This is a clarification of the first condition. Okay. So, and then he says, likewise, everyone who kneels down to drink. Well, you can't get down and drink water like a dog without kneeling down. So that's essentially what's happening in this verse. And God's saying, anyone who kneels down and puts their face down like that, just set them to the side, mark them. And then he goes on to say in verse six, and the number of those who lapped putting their hands to their mouth, as opposed to actually putting their face down to the water, was only 300 men. All the rest knelt down. And the Lord said to Gideon, verse seven, with the 300 men who lapped, I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand. Let all the others go home.

And this second test is interesting. It's interesting because it seems so arbitrary. It just seems so random. Gideon's told to have them drink some water and just mark the ones who drink in a particular way. And whoever drank with that method was sent home. And that leaves just 300 men to fight this battle against what Gideon sees as an innumerable amount of people. Now, through the years, people have tried to suggest that there was a method to God's madness in this, and that the method was he was preserving those who were truly courageous and those who demonstrated alertness to the task. In other words, what they would say is that what God is doing here is he is limiting the army to the best of the best, so that only the best of the best fighters are the ones who are going to go against this army. That actually works against the text here. That's not what's happening here. This is all about the numbers is what this is. God sends 22,000 home because he knows 22,000 of them are afraid. He does this test at the water because he knows what's going to be left over. It's just very few men. It has nothing to do with their courage. It has nothing to do with their alertness. It has everything to do with the numbers. God was reducing the army to nearly nothing.

[13 : 39] And this was just the way that he chose to do it. Now, the 32,000 that Gideon began with, that's still a weak army compared to the Midianite coalition. But now it's just 300 plus Gideon. And the question is, why? Why does God actually do this? Why does he whittle it down to 300 people? And the answer is in verse two. The Lord said to Gideon, the people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand. Now that seems backward, doesn't it? We would expect God to say, you don't have enough to do this. We better get some more men. That's not what he says.

He says, no, you got too many men for this. You can't be delivered with this many men. We're going to have to take some of them out. And here's his reason. Lest Israel boast over me, saying my own hand has saved me.

So knowing Israel's proclivity for ignoring God's presence and power, God strips away everything that Gideon and his army could possibly trust in except God himself. That's what's happening here. Even with 32,000 men, Israel was operating from a position of weakness, but God knew their pride. Their pride was such that if they were to defeat the Midianites, even with just 32,000 men, they would take glory for themselves. But God wants them to see clearly that this battle, it belongs to him, that he is the one who will bring salvation to his people. But Israel would have been quick to take the glory that belongs to God alone. So God needs to expose the depths of their weakness here so that they might understand the truth of his gracious work on their behalf and thereby glorify him.

Dale Ralph Davis has a helpful statement about this. He says that the weakness of Israel in this moment is not a superficial weakness. It is their real condition, he says. And he goes on, so in Christian experience, it is important to define what weakness is not. Weakness does not mean that you are a glob of spiritual jello that flops at God's feet. It does not mean that you whine a lot, even though you may whine a lot. It does not mean that you look pale, even though many of us look a little pale today. It does not mean that you have the flu. You may not feel weak at all, he says.

[16 : 33] It has little to do with how you feel. You do not feel weak. You are weak. It's your genuine condition. That is, you are stripped of all human resources and forced to lean upon God alone.

That is the true nature of our weakness. That we are stripped of all human resources to accomplish anything of eternal value, of our salvific value in our lives. And we must lean on God alone.

Because like Israel, we are so often prone to ignore God's sovereign work in our lives. And we ought not be surprised when we get to various circumstances where it seems like God has stripped us of everything we feel like we need so that we can trust in nothing else but Him.

But even if God doesn't do that, even if He doesn't strip us the way that He strips the army in this moment, He wants us to see that the battle is His.

He wants us to trust Him, not our own devices. He wants us to glorify Him rather than lift up our own egos.

[18:02] Now whether it's in relation to your salvation, or circumstances related to your spiritual growth, or maybe just your progress in life, you must reckon at some point with the reality of your own insufficiency.

Because it's only when you reckon with your own insufficiency that you'll be able to grasp God's power and love at work in your life.

God wants you to understand the work that He's doing in you. And often it takes Him reducing our resources to nothing before we learn to truly trust Him.

And that's what He's doing with Gideon, and He's doing it with the army itself. That's the first thing God does. He does the opposite of what we would do. He reduces His army. Number two, God strengthens His servant.

He strengthens His servant. This is my favorite part. I want you to take a moment and just imagine how absolutely deflating this must have been for Gideon.

[19:09] If you've been with us through the study, you know Gideon's already prone to fear. He is in constant need of reassurance from God. Even after God clothes him with the power of His Spirit so that he might gather these 32,000 men together, he still goes back to God after that.

And he has this whole sign test that he has to do. He lays out his fleece for God on two different occasions. That's not because he's faithful. That's because he's fearful. He needs constant reassurance.

That's who he was. Now, this chapter opens with Gideon and his men getting up early and positioning themselves for this battle. This is probably Gideon's most confident moment in the whole story, at least before his sin at the end.

This is Gideon's most confident moment. That is the morning before God reduces the army. He's done the test. He's seen the fleece. He's gathered the men. And now he's starting to feel some confidence about, okay, maybe God is actually going to do this thing.

And what's the first thing that God does? He takes away all the confidence. He takes away everything that Gideon was trusting in. In that moment, everything that he thought was going to work for him.

[20:28] How deflating. How miserable Gideon must have been. But this situation, it allows us to see something truly wonderful about the Lord.

And that is his personal care for his servant. Now, that's you. That's just not spiritual leaders. That is anyone who belongs to the Lord in Christ Jesus, of course, as we look from a New Testament perspective.

We've been doing this all throughout the Gideon study. We've tried to keep one eye on the big picture of God's salvation of Israel, of his people as a whole. And by application, we've tried to keep one eye on God's gospel work globally in the global church, okay?

But we're trying to keep our other eye on God's unique work in the individual person that is Gideon in this story. And what this does for us at this moment is it helps us to remember that God not only is doing this big work that we may or may not feel like we're a part of, but he is doing a unique and particular work in you, in me.

He knows us. He knows our weaknesses. He knows the intricacies of what's in our mind and in our hearts that no one else may know. And he's doing a particular work in us.

[21:48] And we see that come forward here in this scenario with Gideon. It's God who takes the initiative to strengthen Gideon here. And it's one of my favorite parts.

Look at verse nine. That same night, that is the night that he reduces the army. God wastes no time here. He says to Gideon, arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hand.

Now stop there for a second. What's God saying? He's saying it's time. It's time to go fight the battle. It's done. Victory is secure. But now notice what he says.

But if you're afraid to go down, that is afraid to go and fight the battle at this very moment, I want you to go down to the camp. Take Porah, your servant, with you.

And you shall hear what they say. And afterward, your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp. And here's what I love about this.

[22 : 50] Going down to the camp with Porah is optional. This is not a command from God. It's conditional. Gideon, if you're too afraid to go fight this battle at this moment, just go down on your own.

Take Porah with you. You don't have to go by yourself. There's loneliness in Gideon's position right now. Take Porah with you. And I'm going to do something that will build your confidence if you're afraid.

And what I love about it is there's no response from Gideon. All we read in the next part of the verse is, then he went down with Porah. There's no question he's afraid.

I love it. He goes down and he finds a place to hide at the outpost of the armed men. Isn't this wonderful? Not only does God declare that he's already given the Midianites into Gideon's hand, he's done that a number of times through the story already, but he very tenderly, very patiently allows for Gideon's anxieties to be soothed.

Now, those of you who are parents know what it's like to have to soothe an anxiety that may or may not be rational. You can tell your kids 100 times, this is safe or this is good and I've taken care of it or whatever it is.

[24 : 07] You can jump. I promise I'll catch you. And they're still going to be plagued with anxieties, right? Now, if you're like me, you eventually grow a little impatient. You say, would you just jump already?

Or whatever the thing is. Notice the tenderness that God has here. He has fought this fear with Gideon the whole time, but he never loses his patience. He never loses his tenderness.

Knowing his fear, God gives Gideon another sign that Gideon didn't even ask for. And Gideon's quick to take advantage of it.

And the sign comes with a promise, the promise in verse 11. What Gideon is privileged to hear will give him the strength that he needs to move forward full of faith. Now, it's worth noting at this point that there is a massive difference between having no faith and having a weak faith.

In fact, it's not just a massive difference. It's an eternal difference. No faith would have led Gideon to go home with the other 20 or 32,700 men, right?

[25 : 24] If he didn't have any faith, he would have said, this is ridiculous. There's no way this will ever work. I'm done with it. But he doesn't do that.

That's not his position at all. Despite his fear, he stays and he trusts the Lord with each step. Now, it takes every step, but he trusts the Lord with every step.

Now, we often think that faith is the absence of fear, but that's not true. Faith is not the absence of fear. Faith is better understood as perseverance in the midst of fear.

And that's what we see in Gideon. His faith may have been weak. Still, it's not the strength of our faith, but the object of our faith that saves us.

He may have trembled as he walked down the hill to the outside of the camp, but he still went. We think about this sometimes in relation to God's work of salvation and justification by faith.

[26 : 38] It might have been Mark Dever that I heard one time give an illustration about the way faith works and the life of a believer. It's like two people who are getting on an airplane. One of them is completely comfortable.

They have no problems. They have no anxiety whatsoever. They get on the plane. They know that they're going to get where they need to go. The second person is the complete opposite, right? The second person gets on the plane.

They're just an absolute wreck. They're scared for their life. They're not sure if they can trust the pilot. They're not sure if they can trust the mechanics to actually put this thing together. They're not sure if the side of the plane is going to blow off like it did with the one airline this week, right?

They don't know if this is going to be a convertible or if it's going to be just like a normal aircraft. They don't know. And they're scared to death. Now, both of them get on the plane. Right? One's faith is stronger than the other, but they both get on the plane.

And they both get to their destination. One may get there with a little more joy and comfort than the other, but they both get there. And the point is, it's not the strength of their faith that gets them

where it is that they need to go.

[27 : 44] It's the object of their faith. And in this case, it's not whether or not Gideon was really full of faith. It's the fact that he had enough faith to trust God every step. And anyway, a lot of times in your life, as a believer, you're going to feel that.

Where you're not exactly sure what to think about five or six steps down the road in your life. But all you know is I can trust God enough to take the next step. Well, that's good. Keep taking those steps.

Keep moving forward. Perhaps you're at one of those moments spiritually where God has stripped you of everything you can possibly trust except Him. You're struggling to live with a confident faith. And you need to let this be an encouragement to you that God intends to strengthen you in the way that He strengthened Gideon. Weak or not, you just need to take the next step forward in obedience to God.

You need to persevere through the fear that threatens to freeze you and turn you around. And I know the testimony of the Scripture is that God will meet you there.

[28 : 53] I want you to look at the next part. Verse 13. What is it that happens with Gideon once he gets down the hill? When Gideon came, behold, a man was telling a dream to his comrade and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream and behold, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, came to the tent and struck it so that it fell and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.

And his comrade answered, 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. And as soon as Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped.

And he returned to the camp of Israel and said, Arise, for the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand. Well, let's just walk through this for just a moment.

Gideon is hiding outside the Midianite camp. And he overhears a watchman in the middle of the night describe a bizarre dream that involved a giant loaf of bread tumbling down the hill.

It hit a tent. The tent flipped over and went flat. That's a weird dream. So weird that I don't know that I would share it. But this guy shares it.

[30 : 09] He shares it with his buddy and then his buddy interprets the dream. There's nothing facetious about this at all. There's nothing sarcastic about this interpretation.

This is, God is working through these men. This is a legitimate interpretation from the perspective of this watchman. And he says, this has to have something to do with Gideon who we heard is up there on the hill with these men.

God's going to deliver us into his hand. Now Gideon hears all of this. That's what's interesting about it, isn't it? This was the sign that God had promised. And it did exactly what God said it would do.

It strengthened Gideon for the battle. But what exactly is it about the dream that makes the difference for Gideon? What is it? It caused him to realize that God had brought upon the Midianites this heightened state of anxiety.

anxiety. It's reminiscent of the Canaanites back in Joshua, in the book of Joshua. They heard of what God had done for the Israelites and it says that their hearts melted with fear.

[31 : 22] And God has gone before Gideon and he has caused that same experience to come on the Midianites so that their hearts are melting with fear. From their perspective that may not even be rational.

but nonetheless they are operating at a heightened level of anxiety. What Barry Webb says, what Gideon finds out is that things are not as they seem because the Midianites too are frightened.

In fact, they seem to believe the very thing that Gideon himself has been finding it so hard to believe. That God has given the whole Midianite camp into his hands.

And this does something amazing in Gideon. The effects are dramatic. Having this renewed confidence in the Word of God. Gideon's instinct, look at verse 15, is to first worship and then declare his confidence in the Lord to others.

Now remember, God's strengthening his servant here. His servant is fearful. And what does God do? He gives him revelation. He opens up his plan for Gideon's understanding.

[32 : 37] He does it in a unique way. And what's Gideon's first instinct? He worships the Lord in that moment and then he runs back to the camp where his 300 men are and look at the confidence that he has.

Verse 15, arise, the Lord has given the host of Midian into your hand. The victory has already been won. Let's go get it.

We don't see Gideon like that anywhere else in this whole story except here. Why? Because of what God's doing. Now with this in mind, perhaps a good test for knowing the nature of your faith is to consider the nature of your personal worship and your public confidence in the Lord God.

think about that for just a moment. You say, what is my faith really like? Because sometimes it's hard to figure that out, isn't it? But what's your worship like?

What's your declared confidence in the Lord like? Do you truly worship from the heart Sunday by Sunday? Are you eager in the gathering of God's people to sing to one another, our sins, they are many, but His mercy is more?

[33 : 59] If you don't sing that with confidence, then you probably don't have a very strong faith. What about your personal worship? Do you have any private worship to the Lord?

Time in His Word? Time in prayer? Maybe time in song? Time where you are fellowshiping, communing with your God because you believe Him, because you're confident in Him.

What's your worship like? Do you ever find yourself declaring confidence in God to other people?

Do you ever urge them to trust and obey the Lord because you found Him yourself to be faithful and worthy of their worship?

I think that's a helpful text because the natural result here of God strengthening Gideon through His Word is worship and public praise.

[35 : 09] Now, God doesn't reveal all of His plan to us all the time. We know that. And we can't always expect God to do for us what He did for Gideon in this passage as far as just kind of laying it out there, right?

He doesn't always do that. But He has made some things very clear through the revelation of His Word, particularly His plan of salvation.

If you have eyes to see and ears to hear the gospel of Jesus, your faith in Him will radically transform your worship and your evangelism.

I'm not talking about those of us who know what the gospel is and that we can tell you what it is or we are familiar enough with the theology of it that we can explain it to you.

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about those of you who have ears to hear. You have come to know Christ personally through the gospel. When that happens, your faith in God is strengthened in a way that only God can strengthen it.

[36 : 20] And when your faith is strengthened in the way that only God can strengthen it, it radically transforms your worship. Your Sunday worship is different. Your desire for private worship day by day is different.

Your declaration of confidence in God is different. Your evangelism is different. Why? Because in the revelation of God through His word, you have come to know His Son in the gospel.

And God has done this work in you. And we see this in seed form with Gideon right here. But God hasn't only revealed His plan of salvation. He's made that abundantly clear to us.

But there's a lot of other things in the scriptures that God has made abundantly clear. Things about who He is. Things about how He desires for us to live and glorify Him.

And this kind of revelation, we're not talking about subjective revelation that I just wake up one morning and I think, well, God has told me this. You can't trust that. We're talking about the written Word of God, our confidence in the scriptures.

[37 : 25] And what does it tell us? The revelation of the Word of God. It will strengthen your faith to persevere even when faithfulness will cost you everything.

Now let's put that in some shoe leather to that for just a moment. When you have a confidence in the Word of God and a confidence in the faithfulness of God, you will stand for His truth culturally even when the culture is vehemently against you.

Whether that be in the hot topic issues of our day with the LGBTQ plus movement, the sexual revolution, whether that be through issues of abortion, whether it be through issues of ethical and moral considerations and other ways of our life, you will stand faithful if you are confident in the faithfulness of God and His Word.

Even if it costs you everything, and at some point, it's going to cost us a lot. At some point, it's going to cost us a lot. If faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ, that's what Romans 10 17 plainly says.

Faith comes by hearing, hearing through the Word of Christ. That is the Bible, that's the Scriptures. then it is through the Scriptures that God intends to strengthen you and produce in you the proper worship and zeal for His glory.

[39 : 01] You say, you know, I feel a lot like Gideon. I've heard the call of God to salvation. I've got that. But when it comes to the details of my life and my spiritual walk, I struggle.

I struggle with confidence in the Lord and I struggle with confidence in what the Bible says and I struggle in all of these ways. And let me just tell you, if we follow this progression the way that the Scripture lies it out, the solution for you is just to go back to the Word.

It is in the revelation of God that the Spirit of God does His work in us. That strengthens our faith in a way that we don't understand all the time. That's the thing about this.

This is a divine work of God in us. And He has a way that He does it. He does it by His Spirit through His Word. But it's still His work.

So what we need to do is get back to the Word and let the Spirit do the work through the Word and prayer that He has determined to do.

[40 : 11] And through that commitment I think we'll find that God strengthening us in the way that He strengthened Gideon. Third thing God does. First thing He does He reduces the army.

Then He strengthens His servant. Third thing, and this is a simple thing, He displays His victory. He displays His victory. So Gideon's got a renewed faith now. He returns to the camp.

But he comes back with a completely unconventional plan of attack. He divides the men into three companies. He gave each man a trumpet, a jar, and a torch.

Hardly the things you would expect for a battle of this nature. That's what He gives them. And then He just tells them, whatever I do, you do. Okay? Just trust me.

Look at verse 19. So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch when they had just set the watch and they blew the trumpets, smashed the jars that were in their hands.

[41 : 12] That's Gideon and the men with him. Then the three companies blew the trumpets together and they broke the jars. They held in their left hands the torches and in their right hands the trumpets to blow.

And they cried out, A sword for the Lord and for Gideon. Then every man stood in his place around the camp and all the army ran. They cried out and fled and when they blew the three hundred trumpets the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army and the army fled.

This is amazing. Amazing. Ironically, the men yell, a sword for the Lord and for Gideon.

While none of them are said to have actually had a sword. We don't even know if they had weaponry at this point. The only weapons that are mentioned in the text were in the hands of the Midianites.

Not only are they in a heightened state of anxiety, it's the middle of the night and they're all asleep. Now you know what that's like. This morning, Ashlyn had told me last night I want to ride with you to go to the school tomorrow morning.

[42 : 26] I said, okay, I'll come wake you up. So this morning, whatever time it was, I went into the girl's room and Ashlyn was still asleep and she was sleeping soundly. And I just nudged her a little bit and I said, Ashlyn, it's time to get up.

And the expression that I got in that moment was, what? What? Now she reacts that way because she's in a deep sleep and she's just been awakened and when you're awakened in a deep sleep by somebody else intentionally, you don't exactly know where you are or what you're doing and it's a little frightening in that moment.

Now take that and apply it to someone who's just definitely afraid of everything in their life at that moment. They're afraid that at any moment, Gideon and this army is going to come down and they're going to kill us all.

And now all of a sudden, all that they hear are trumpets blowing and men screaming and they look out and they just see they're encircled by torches and they're just trying to figure out what's going on.

It's dark and what do they do? It tells us. Look at verse 22. When they blew the 300 trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against the army and the army fled.

[43 : 32] God had gone before Gideon to create in the enemy a sense of fear and confusion that led to their self-destruction. They killed each other.

Gideon and his men, they didn't have to do anything. You know what they got to do? They got to stand on the outskirts of the camp and watch God do God's work.

That's what they got to do. And why did they get to do that? Because they were just faithful enough. They were just faithful enough to take the next step and go down the hill and do the thing that Gideon said to do.

And because of their faithfulness, what they got to see on display was not their power. They got to see God's power. Now, do you see how little this had to do with Gideon and his 300 men?

This is God all the way through. God calls the man. God gathers the army. God reduces the army and he does it his way.

[44 : 46] Then he strengthens his man. He gives him a plan. He goes before him in the plan and he does the work just so that his man can see it happen. That's amazing.

They were definitely instruments in the hand of God. That is undoubted. And the Lord was gracious to use them in his work. That's for sure. But their simple faithfulness allowed them to stand on the outside and just watch God work.

They were participants in God's work so that they might see that it is indeed God's work and give him glory.

Now, I think this is an important takeaway for Christians here. God doesn't need us. We're thinking, we may be thinking about salvation and the gospel and we can make those applications too.

But primarily we're thinking as Christians, the work that God has called us to do in evangelism and raising our kids, perhaps in just everyday faithfulness, we know that God doesn't need us to do his work.

[45 : 59] But he is pleased to use us in his work. And he does use us. And in the process of that work, it's easy to be gripped by fear and anxiety.

That will be a common occurrence in our lives until the day that we die. But when we're faithful to trust and obey the Lord, we are blessed to witness him do the work that only he can do.

Because in the end, the battle is the Lord's. And so is the glory. We can apply this in a lot of different ways. Think about it as a parent.

How fearful of a prospect is it to be responsible for other human beings? Not only physically. In fact, that might be the easier part.

How daunting of a task is it, Andy, to wake up every day knowing that your responsibility is to raise these kids in the discipline and the admonition of the Lord. Which means that you're going to yourself have to be disciplined in the truth of God and the admonition of the Lord.

[47 : 09] And then you're going to have to be strong enough in that discipline to actually communicate it to others in a way that's helpful and it's consistent and it's faithful and truthful. And those of us with kids know that we can get to the end of that and we can say this is an impossible task.

And we can be gripped by fear in that. Is anything ever going to happen with my kid? What's the Lord going to do here? Can he do anything here? And really what the Lord's calling us to is faithfulness.

Because you can't do the work that only he can do. And he's calling you to be faithful and if you will be faithful. Not perfect.

Faithful. Typically he's going to let you watch him work. That work may not always happen in the way that you envision.

It may be a work that he's doing in you. Maybe even more than what he's doing in the people that you care for. But you will be able to see him work when you're faithful. That's just one category.

[48 : 12] We can think about this in our evangelism, can't we? You've got people in your life, John, that you're trying to win to the Lord and some of the things that you're doing with media. You can get to the end of that. I can testify to this personally as a pastor who's pastored for four years preaching the gospel the best.

I know how to do it. Sunday by Sunday seems very little conversion as a result of that. I think that I don't know what to do. Like this is an impossible task. It feels like those in your talk sometimes with just our evangelism.

But we're not called to provide fruit. We're called to be faithful. And when we're faithful, God will let us see his work accomplished before us.

Because at the end of the day, the battle is his and so is the glory. And maybe the failures and the weaknesses you feel now as a Christian and in the things that God has called you to be as a Christian, maybe those failures are there because God's having to strip the pride away from your life so that you will actually give him some glory.

We could say there are a lot of other ways. We'll leave it there. I said in the beginning that this event was not about God's fight against Midian. It was his fight against bell worship among his people.

[49 : 27] And the Midianite coalition was God's instrument of judgment against Israel's idolatry. That's what's interesting about this, right? God has to provide salvation for his people, but what is he saving them from?

He's saving them from himself. And in his initiative, he raises up a deliverer and empowers them to do it.

Now, it's not very hard to draw the gospel implications there, right? We talk about salvation. What is it that God is saving us from? He's saving us from himself, from his justice and his wrath.

And then he takes the initiative by sending his son to die on a cross, to live the life that we were meant to live and die the death that we deserve to die in order that he might provide salvation for us.

It's amazing. It's amazing. He proved his steadfast love by raising up a deliverer for his people in Judges chapter 7. And then he demanded that they repent of their idolatry and turn back to him.

[50 : 46] And if they were to do that, they would receive the blessing of his covenant. Well, it all ultimately points us to Jesus. God has displayed his steadfast love for us in the person and work of Christ.

And he demands that we repent of our idolatry and that we turn to him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And anyone who does that will receive the blessings of his covenant.

Forgiveness, eternal life, reconciliation with your creator. And why wouldn't you want that?

The Savior's already been provided. God says, believe and turn and the blessings will be yours.

This story helps us understand that. If not for any other reason, by just pointing us forward to it.

Let's pray. As I pray here and as your heads are bowed where you are.

[52 : 03] Acknowledge that at this point in our service, Sunday by Sunday, I don't do a great job of calling us to respond. But a response to the word of God is necessary anytime we come to it.

We don't respond to God if he has spoken. We respond to God because he has spoken in his word.

And whether it be through confession of sin or the consecration of your life in a renewed sense of faith and commitment of serving the Lord faithfully or maybe it's praise or whatever it may be.

Faithfulness in this moment for each one of us is to properly respond to God's word. So as I pray, I want to encourage you not to waste the moment that there in your seat respond to the Lord and to his word, to his gospel, to his truth.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.