

First Steps For A New Believer

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you haven't been around for a couple of weeks, we have reached the Gideon cycle of the book of Judges. And the amount of detail included by the author at this point really gives us a fantastic opportunity to slow our pace a bit from what we had done in the first few chapters.

It allows us to really examine more thoroughly each individual scene. And I actually have found that to be quite helpful in my own study, and I hope you find that to be helpful as well as we study these passages together.

Now, we need to recognize that this does pose a particular danger for us to miss the forest for the tree, so to speak. You ever find yourself doing that in your Bible study?

You get so caught up in the minutia of a particular verse or a particular passage that you end up misinterpreting it because you've lost sight of the bigger picture of what's actually happening and why God has put it there.

So there is a bit of a danger in this. As we slow down our pace and we look at each individual section here, there is a bit of a danger that we'll lose the big picture and then maybe misinterpret or misapply.

[1 : 1 1] So what we want to do then, as I mentioned to you last week, we want to keep one eye on the big picture of what God is doing in and through Israel, while we're keeping the other eye on the finer details of what God is doing in and through this man, Gideon.

And as far as Israel is concerned, at this point in the book, they were facing a really quite severe season of oppression from this coalition led by the Midianites.

And we found at the beginning of the chapter that it was because of their idolatry. God had given them into the hand of Midian, and God was using this disciplinary action as a means to lead his people to repentance.

And we talked about that. We talked about the difference between God's punitive action against unbelievers, those who are outside of the covenant. And we contrasted that with God's disciplinary corrective action with those who are inside the covenant.

Midian is outside the covenant. They're going to ultimately be completely decimated by the time we get to the end of this section. Israel, however, though guilty of the same sin, though just as wicked as Midian themselves, happen to be inside the covenant, and they receive a different form of judgment from God.

[2 : 3 6] They are not completely destroyed. Rather, God is disciplining them, and he's using Midian to do it. And then in his intent to deliver them from their oppression, God has chosen and raised up and is in the process of raising up this man, Gideon, whom he will use to save his people.

But as we study through this text, we find out very quickly that great men and women of God are not made in a moment. You don't come to Christ in a moment, and then all of a sudden, you're just as mature and seasoned as any believer who has been saved for a number of years.

That doesn't happen in any of our lives. It didn't happen in Gideon's life either. And this section is a helpful reminder of that. As sinful creatures, God graciously, patiently molds and shapes us into vessels fit for his use.

And that's exactly what we see happening step by step in the life of Gideon. Now, last week, I likened the verses, verses 11 through 24, to something of a conversion experience for Gideon.

And again, I recognize that we need to be careful when assigning New Testament realities to Old Testament narratives, using gospel language in places where the gospel has not yet been presented, at least in its fullest form.

[4 : 08] Jesus has not yet come at this point. We need to recognize that. Gideon himself would have no possible concept of the cross or of the resurrection.

So, when I talk about a conversion experience, I'm not saying that what Gideon experienced in this moment looks exactly as what you and I might experience. But, what we do find in those verses is all of the components of biblical conversion being presented.

You remember back to what we studied last week. He was confronted by the Word of God through the messenger of God. Paul tells us that same thing happens with us. In Romans chapter 10, he says, Faith comes by hearing.

Hearing comes by the Word of God. In other words, if you are to be saved, you're going to be saved through the preaching of God's Word, the preaching of God's truth, and the confrontation of God's Word through God's messenger.

Whether that be a preacher on a Sunday morning, whether it be a co-worker who has courage to share the gospel with you. We see that happening in Gideon's life. He understood the reality of his sinfulness in light of the holiness of God.

[5 : 19] When he finally comes to terms with the fact that he's before the messenger of God, remember what he says, Alas, O Lord! He thinks he's going to die because he's seen God's angel face to face.

He recognizes his sinfulness. He cries out for mercy. And then he experiences the incomprehensible grace of God. As the Lord says, Peace be to you, Gideon.

You shall not die. Remember what he said. And that immediately results in genuine worship. And all of these things are part and parcel of what it means to be converted.

It's biblical conversion. Gideon's, the work of God's grace happening prior to the coming of Christ. And then for us, of course, these components take the shape of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives.

And so we're going to continue on with that thought. If verses 11 through 24 give us something of a parallel of biblical conversion, what we find happening in the text that I just read Gideon parallels what we might call the first steps of life for a new believer.

[6 : 25] Just think about what we just read. After his transformative moment with God in verse 23 and 24, Gideon was quickly thrust into this daunting situation, wasn't he?

His commitment to the Lord set him against the traditions and beliefs of his own family and community. And it becomes immediately relevant.

What God commanded him to do not only tested his faith, it was actually an essential move in declaring the message of repentance and salvation that God intended for his people to hear and understand.

And so what I want to do this morning is just walk you through this text, and we want to note what is revealed for us about God and salvation, and then, of course, also the progressive work of sanctification for those of us who do experience the grace of God and salvation.

Okay, so that's kind of the roadmap that we're following. First thing I want you to notice is an initial task. An initial task. Look at verse 25. That night the Lord said to him, Take your father's bull and the second bull, seven years old, pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, cut down the asherah that's beside it, and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order.

[7 : 56] Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the asherah that you shall cut down. So what we find here with Gideon is that the Lord wastes no time in activating him in his plan and in his purposes.

On the very night that he experiences God's peace and enjoyed this moment of genuine worship, God gave him a task that would send an unmistakable message to his family and his community.

It's an immediate task that God lays on him. We're reminded with this that the call to trust and obey God demands immediate engagement.

Engagement for God and against his enemies. There's really no buffer. Sometimes we expect that that would happen, that when someone comes to Christ, they kind of get a few moments to collect their breath, and they can just kind of go into the backside of the desert somewhere as we see some biblical characters and kind of be trained up.

And then once they're ready, God calls them into making their faith. But that's not how actually it works. It didn't happen for Gideon that way. It doesn't happen for us that way.

[9 : 09] And if you're only now coming to Christ in genuine faith, it's not going to happen for you that way either. God requires immediate engagement, like a pebble in a slingshot.

Conversion instantly catapults us into a life that is decidedly and dynamically different than what we've ever experienced before.

It takes no time at all for our commitment to Christ to be tested and for God to put us in a position that demands we make our faith known. Perhaps you can even recall back to your own conversion, maybe the excitement of that, and then immediately getting into a place with your friends or your family or your coworkers where it's going to be necessary for you to make that known, whether it's through an explanation of why you won't do the things that you were doing just the day before or the week before, or why you won't behave a particular way, or maybe it's just the sharing of that gospel message, and immediately you're thrust into this awkward and intimidating position of standing for God and against those who are his enemies.

And that's what's happening with Gideon. His initial task was to destroy the community shrine to Baal and Ashtaroth. And what makes it even more complex for him is the fact that this particular altar for Baal was his dad's.

His own father had sponsored and built it and was probably, as we get a sense in this text, was probably Joash was functioning as something of a priest to Baal on behalf of the people of the town.

[10 : 44] Then he was to build an altar in its place. He was to sacrifice his father's bull as a burnt offering to Yahweh. And in one sense, as we read through this, what God asked for Gideon to do here was more difficult than the large-scale war against the Midianites that we're going to see in chapter 7.

It's one thing to work against a common enemy for the people who are closest to you and your family and community, for everybody to kind of, in unity together, recognize Midian is bad.

Midian is hurting us. Midian has to be dealt with. That's one thing. It's quite another thing to set yourself against your own family and friends, to perform some type of action or to declare some kind of message that actually says, no, not only is Midian bad, but you're bad.

You're the problem. That's hard. Sharing Romans chapter 3 with a stranger at Costco is pretty easy to do.

Sharing Romans chapter 3 with your wife or your husband or your parents or your grown children is not quite so easy to do. That's what we find happening with Gideon.

[12 : 10] This task was vitally important to the work that God was doing, not only in Israel, but in Gideon himself. It was a visual demonstration of the sermon preached by the prophet in verses 8 through 10.

Remember, that was from a couple of weeks ago as God sends this prophet before he sends a deliverer and he declares a message of salvation through repentance. Well, what God is having Gideon to do in this moment is a visual demonstration of that same message.

The people needed to understand that the oppression from Midian was only an indicator of a much deeper problem. Their circumstance was not the result of Midian's power, but their own idolatry.

And as long as they continued in that idolatry, their circumstances were only going to worsen. God might deliver them from Midian, but there's just going to be another enemy that comes along the way.

And that's exactly what happens in this book. Over and over and over, God is gracious and the people continue and persist in their idolatry and so their condition never ultimately gets better.

[13 : 25] They continue to struggle beneath this oppression. Why such a demand for Gideon, asked Del Ralph Davis. Because two altars cannot coexist side by side.

You cannot have an altar to Yahweh and an altar to Baal. They're mutually exclusive, he says. And what we find is this entire episode here amounts to God's demand for repentance.

The repentance without which you cannot be saved. That's the message here. Not just to the people of Ophrah, but to the entire nation of Israel.

Let's think about that for just a moment, this dynamic of repentance. What does it actually mean? Well, the word itself means to make a turn, right? It means to turn from one direction and go in a different direction.

And repentance unto salvation in the Bible really has two parts and we see them demonstrated here in this story. First, repentance requires that you turn away from sin and unbelief.

[14 : 42] You turn away from sin and unbelief. It wasn't enough for Gideon to simply build an altar to God. That wasn't enough. Baal's altar, the Asherah, which would have been a wooden post next to Baal that represented the worship of Ashtaroah, which was believed to be Baal's female consort.

Okay, we talked about that in another passage. But basically, the way this would have been set up is an altar to Baal and then right next to it is this large wooden post that represented Baal's wife, essentially.

And both things were involved in the pagan worship of Baal. Both Baal and the Asherah, they both had to be destroyed. It wouldn't be enough for Gideon just to build an altar to God next to it and sacrifice his bull.

He could do all of those other things and it wouldn't have been the message that God intended. It wouldn't have been a message of repentance unto salvation. Baal had to be destroyed. The second requirement of true repentance is a decisive turning to the true God.

So Gideon was not only to tear down the altar to Baal, he was to build in its place an altar to Yahweh, the Lord God.

[16 : 02] And to obey God's command, Gideon had to perform both actions. Turning away from sin and unbelief, not just to rid yourself of that particular thing, but to decisively turn to the true worship of Yahweh.

Yahwehism, if we want to call it that in the Old Testament. In fact, to leave out one of these facets of repentance would have completely distorted the message of salvation that God was sending to Israel.

Their whole problem, the reason they were facing the judgment of God was because of their sin. So if Gideon had stood up as a leader and attempted to be a spiritual leader and said, you know what? We're going to worship God on Sunday.

And we're going to do the Sunday thing and we're going to go to church and we're going to sing the songs and say the prayers and all that stuff. But he doesn't deal with all the bells that are in his house from Monday to Saturday. Then it's not the message of salvation.

It's not repentance. Because the altar to Baal and the altar to God cannot coexist together. You cannot claim Christianity on one hand and bow to Baal on the other hand and expect that God will bless you with gracious salvation in response to that.

[17 : 20] He will not. What Gideon does here is vastly important. God also requires this repentance for our salvation.

It wasn't just for Israel. In Luke chapter 13, Jesus himself says to a group of Jews, unless you repent, you will all perish, he says.

Unless you do spiritually what Gideon does physically, you will die. Eternal hell, Jesus says. In Luke 24, after his resurrection, Jesus says this to his disciples.

Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

In other words, with the gospel message, what's part and parcel to that? How does somebody receive forgiveness of sins? Jesus says, preach the gospel of Jesus and repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[18 : 22] It's necessary. And then when it came time for the apostles to actually preach that message in Acts chapter 2, this is what we read. When they heard the gospel, they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Spirit.

Repentance is absolutely necessary for salvation. Without it, you cannot be saved. And the repentance unto salvation, genuine, true repentance, requires the same two elements represented by Gideon's task.

It is a turning away from sin and unbelief in order that you may genuinely turn to Christ, Lord and Savior. without both features, you have not truly repented unto salvation.

And to leave one facet of it out of your gospel preaching and evangelism is to distort the gospel message. It doesn't make sense without tearing down Baal's altar in order to build the Lord's.

[19 : 41] And it is worth a note of clarification here of what it actually means to repent of your sin. We are not talking about getting out a piece of notebook paper and listing all the bad things you have ever done in your life.

And then praying through that list and saying, Lord, you know, when I was 16 I did this really stupid thing and I disobeyed my parents and I snuck out of my house. Lord, forgive me for that, please. I won't do that again. And you check that off the list.

And then you move down to the next. Well, Lord, there was also this time that I looked at things on the computer I shouldn't have looked at. I never told my wife about it but it is on my mind now. And so, that's not repentance.

That's not what we're talking about. That's remorse. That may be necessary to some extent but that's not what we're talking about with genuine repentance. We're talking about not a checklist. We're talking about a disposition of heart, a change of heart.

We're on one hand thinking more broadly. We are pursuing the world. We're pursuing self. We're saying, I'm going to do my thing and I'm going to do it my way and no one's going to tell me any different and we're finally saying, no, I'm surrendering all of that.

[20 : 48] Everything that I am, my identity, all of my desires, everything that I want out of this life, everything that I want to do, I'm setting all of that aside. I'm turning away from that in order that I might turn to Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.

I'm going to trust Him as the propitiation for those sins and now I'm going to follow Him as Lord which means all of these desires that I had over here are now submitted to His Lordship.

And that means one day you're going to sit down after you come to Christ you're going to open your Bible maybe six, twenty, thirty years later and you're going to read a passage of Scripture and the Lord's going to bring up something in your life and He's going to point on your heart and He's going to say, this is it, you're disobeying me in this way.

Genuine repentance is the disposition of heart that says, this is hard for me to read and it's hard for me to hear but the Lord Jesus, He's my Savior, He's my Lord. I surrender what I want to Him.

That's what we're talking about with genuine repentance here. We're not talking about checklists. We're talking about something much deeper than that. A heart level transformation that comes as a result of the grace of God at work in our lives.

[21 : 57] Let's look at verse 27. This kind of concludes this particular portion of it, the task. Notice what Gideon did. Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the Lord had told him.

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. A common misconception of the Bible is that it's a book of heroes.

The Bible's not a book of heroes. In fact, there's only one hero in the Bible and that's the Lord Jesus. No one else qualifies. In fact, if you pay attention as you read, you'll realize very quickly that all of these people are profoundly flawed and weak, underwhelming even.

And Gideon's no exception to that, is he? This verse reveals, once again, just how relatable he is to most people. He's prone to fear.

He's in constant need of reassurance. But then he also shows this tremendous faith in this moment, doesn't he? How does he show faith?

[23 : 05] He's scared. He does it at night. He's afraid for people to see him. He's afraid to be known. How does he actually show faith? He obeys God in spite of that fear.

That's the key here. Only those of us with a perfect faith should feel comfortable coming down hard on Gideon for doing this at night. This is a cast the first stone kind of situation where we come to a passage like this and we think, man, Gideon, come on, man, pull yourself up a little bit.

He's so scared. You wouldn't be scared. Of course you would. You know what true faith is? Obeying God when you're scared.

Yes, he should have trusted more confidently in God's promises. But let's not ignore the fact that he still performed a task most of us would be unwilling to do. Gideon knew his life was on the line with this.

We often falter under the threat of far less severe consequences than what Gideon was under here. Let's give the man a break for just a second and acknowledge and rejoice in the fact that he obeyed the Lord.

[24 : 23] We should be encouraged by that. Faith is not the absence of fear as many have defined it wrongly.

Faith is trusting and obeying God even when you are completely filled with fear. Fortunately for us and fortunately for Gideon, God doesn't require heroism.

He just requires obedience. And that's what we see in Gideon. We should read this text and remember again that it's not the strength of our faith that ultimately matters. It's the object of that faith.

And the object of our faith will get the job done. We should take comfort in the fact even that God is so patient and merciful with Gideon's weakness here, isn't it?

It's funny, we come to texts like this and we want to condemn people like Gideon when God doesn't even do that. There's no correction of Gideon here.

[25 : 25] Just a simple statement. He does it at night. This was tremendous faith. This is why Hebrews 11 says Gideon is somebody we need to look to as an example of faith. That's the initial task.

Second, let's see an incensed mob. An incensed mob. 28, when the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down.

The Asherah beside it was cut down. The second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. And they said one to another, who has done this thing? After they had searched and inquired, they said, Gideon, the son of Joash, has done this.

And the men of the town said to Joash, bring out your son that he may die, for he's broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it. They want Gideon dead.

So then Gideon's fears are realized the very next morning. People of the town wake up, they realize what's happened, they immediately begin to inquire as to who is responsible, and when they find out that it's Gideon, they stand outside of Gideon's father's house, and they say you need to send out your son because it's time for him to die.

[26 : 39] Look at what he did. His faith in and obedience to God set him at odds with his family and community, and they were out for blood.

That's terrifying. Sometimes the gospel message is unhelpfully presented to us in an idealized form, and people come and they're told that if they just come to Christ, things are going to get better, and we convince ourselves sometimes that if we do what's right and we say what's right, that the people around us are going to be very respectful of that, and they're just going to admire our conviction, and that is not at all what happens.

That's not at all what happens. That's not what happened for Gideon either. That's why the first test of faith for a young believer is often to deal with vehement opposition from people that we actually care deeply about being accepted by.

Like mom and dad, and the family that's around us, and the community of friends that we've developed over time, and our coworkers. We want to be accepted by these people. We want to be included by these people, and loved by these people.

And yet our new faith in Jesus Christ often sets us in opposition to them. And those relationships, and those blessings are then at risk. the call to discipleship is a public identification with Jesus that will always, always put us at odds with the world.

[28 : 12] That's the thing. And we know it will always do that because that's what Jesus said it would do. Remember his words in Luke chapter 9. Jesus says, if anyone would come after me, in other words, if anyone will follow me, be my disciple, trusting me for salvation, if anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, repent, take up his cross daily, follow me.

What is that all about? The cross for them is a symbol of death. In other words, Jesus says, come prepared to die. Come prepared to die.

Identifying with my cross, identifying with me will bring great hardship. And if you're going to come after me, you need to be prepared for that. You need to be prepared to do that.

Jesus also warned that belief in and faithfulness to his gospel runs the risk of being persecuted even by one's family. Matthew chapter 10, brother will deliver brother over to death, Jesus says, and the father, his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

God will be saved. This brings further light to Gideon's faithfulness in spite of his fear.

[29 : 41] A fundamental conviction of a true Christian is to fear God more than man. It is to desire the pleasure and glory of God more than the acceptance of this world.

It is to lose one's life for the life that Christ offers. If following Jesus and standing for his gospel meant that your family would disown you, would you still follow him?

What if that's what was at risk for you? Would you still do it? What if your kids decided, as long as you're going to do this whole Christian thing, you're not going to have me, I'm going to have nothing to do with you anymore?

What if it was the vice versa and your parents say, you know what, if you're going to continue on this Christian thing, you're going to have to find another place to live because I'm not going to tolerate it in my house. Is Jesus still worth it even then?

Is Jesus still worth it when it comes with the risk of losing really close friendships? What about your business and your work and your ability to climb the ladder in your business?

[30 : 58] What if it even means your life? Is Jesus still worth it? Jesus continues in Matthew 10, whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.

Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, Jesus said, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Gideon was faced immediately the very next day with that exact predicament and we don't need to be surprised when it's a predicament that we face as well. Why do you suppose the people had such a strong reaction?

The Torah sentence, the law of Moses that is, the sentence for idolatry was now being pronounced on the one who destroyed the idol. It's completely reversed now, isn't it?

Shows just how severe the spiritual decline in Israel had become. They were now thoroughly Canaanized and were sentencing the righteous one for his righteousness.

[32 : 14] righteousness. How wonderfully amazing that God was still interested and intent on delivering them. Isn't that amazing?

The people in Gideon's community are not Gentile people. These aren't Canaanites. These are Israelites. The very people that should have been supporting him in this endeavor are the ones that are now calling for his life.

Why? Because he was faithful to the God that they supposedly belong to? And yet God still comes in and the whole time what he's doing is he's raising up Gideon in order that he might deliver the people that are calling for Gideon to be murdered.

What love is that? What grace is that? that? If you want to see yourself in any of the people in this passage probably best not to look at Gideon.

Probably best to look at the people of the town. You want to understand God's love for you in salvation. Look at God's intent to save them despite their vehemence against his man.

[33 : 31] Isn't that the picture of the cross that we see? We sing songs about it. City of Light has a great song about this called Jerusalem where it walks through the different scenes of the crucifixion and it talks about Jesus being nailed to a cross by the very people that he came to save.

In that exact moment of death and treachery the whole point of it is to save the people who are doing it. What grace is this?

What love? It's possible that the people are enraged here because they were fearful of being under a curse from Baal. They are Baalites for sure.

And how ironic that they would fear the wrath of a God that doesn't even exist more than they feared the wrath of the true God who had proven himself to them time and time again. But the vehemence against Gideon really just reflects the fact that we love our sin.

We love our sin and we hate anyone who would try to stand in the way of us getting what we want and living the way we want to live. We hate those people.

[34 : 40] John says it this way in John chapter 3. He's interpreting Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus in John 3 and he interprets it this way. He says, This is the judgment.

The light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his work should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. Watch John getting on out with that.

What's your typical response when somebody confronts you in your sin? John says that the wicked in heart despise light because it exposes that their works are evil.

They don't like to be told that they're sinners. They don't like to be told that their works are evil, that they're set up against God. People don't like to go to church. You're unbelieving friends. Don't be surprised when you invite them to a service.

[35 : 44] They don't want to come here. They know when they come that the light exposes the darkness and we love our sin. We love the darkness more than we love the light. But then John continues on.

Those who care for their lives to reflect the glory of God. They love the light. They love the light of God's truth because they desire to do what is true and right.

It's painful, but they're not afraid for the light to expose their wickedness because that means that they're going to move forward in glory, forward in glorifying the Lord. Just as Gideon's actions expose the wickedness of his community, so does a confrontation of God's word expose what's really in our hearts as well.

So that when we come to church Sunday by Sunday and we see the passages that are read and we read them or we hear their sermons, whoever it may be that's preaching, and we're confronted in our sin, what's our response to that?

Do we want to run away from the light? That would be an indicator that your heart is wicked. There's wickedness there. You don't actually have a true desire to please the Lord. Or do we love the pain?

[36 : 59] Hurt so good, right? Because we know what's happening there. The Lord is transforming us. He's sanctifying us. He's exposing our sin in order that he may reveal more of his light.

An incensed mob. Thirdly and finally, we see an illuminating conclusion. An illuminating or clarifying conclusion. Verse 31, Joash said to all who stood against him, will you contend for Baal?

Will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he's a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down.

Therefore, on that day, Gideon was called Jerob Baal. That is to say, let Baal contend against him, because he broke down his altar. In the end, it's Joash, the idolater, the very one who built and sponsored this altar to Baal, who comes to Gideon's defense.

That's quite the twist in the story, isn't it? When we're faithful to stand for God's truth, most people will hate us for it. But then, God will also use us to soften the hearts of others.

[38 : 12] I think that's what's happening with Joash here. The text doesn't say that he fully turns to God in this moment, but at the very least, he's questioning the existence and power of Baal.

This is an exchange between him and the people of the town that's similar to what happens with Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18.

You remember that great war over whose God is real, and they build the altars and they do the thing there. This is so similar to that, isn't it? The language of it. Joash appears like Elijah to be mocking this supposed deity now.

Now, gods are supposed to save their own people, but Joash charged the men with having to save Baal instead. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, says Joash.

And then he gave Gideon a new name, Jerob Baal. Means, let Baal contend against him. Let Baal contend. Let Baal come to his own defense, essentially.

[39 : 24] It's meant to be a mockery of Baal, I think. And everywhere Gideon went from then on, his very name would remind people that the gods of Canaan were powerless against the God of Israel.

He's a marked man now in the best of ways. This conclusion, it illuminates and clarifies the real significance of the story.

This was not ultimately a war between Israel and Midian, but between Yahweh and Baal. God was reminding his people that he alone is God, that he would not tolerate their idolatry, and that their repentance was necessary for their salvation.

Gideon becomes a marked man. He gets this new name, man moving forward. He would be known for his faithfulness to God and his stand against the worship of Baal.

And such is the case for believers who stand for the truth. We become marked individuals in the best possible way. Coming to Christ, we surrender our identities to be identified with Jesus.

[40 : 39] our faith and obedience should then follow us as an illuminating message that declares the glory of the one true God.

As we bring the study to a close, I want to remind you of something that I haven't mentioned in a few weeks, and we focused on it a little bit in the introduction to this book, but we need to remember that Judges is not merely a history of ancient Israel.

It's a prophetic message about God and about salvation. So when we come to each section of the book like we have this morning, we aren't simply looking to gain more knowledge about the events that took place, but we are to hear and to respond to the message that God has given.

And with that in mind, I think there's two primary takeaways that we need to consider in this text. First, we need to examine our hearts to see what kind of altars to bail might need to be destroyed.

What kind of bells are you bowing to day by day in your life? A fundamental tenet of a covenant relationship with God is found in the first commandment.

[42 : 02] You shall have no other gods besides me. I have no other gods before me. And the chances are that you don't have a shrine set up to a false deity in your home.

But for us, bail is anything that stands between us and faithfulness wholeheartedly to God. And bail takes many shapes.

Bail for you may be materialism. Bail for you may be your work. Bail for you may just be selfish desires that you have.

Bail for you may be your family. Bail for you may be all kinds of things. It will take many shapes, but it ultimately comes back to the worship of self.

We're chasing our own wills at the expense of God's will. And what we need to remember is that you cannot expect God's blessing while you're bowing to bail.

[43 : 07] You cannot expect salvation while you persist in willful sin.

And what you need to do is repent. Destroy the altar to bail in your life and genuinely worship God in spirit and in truth.

That's takeaway number one. But then we also need to follow Gideon's example of faithfulness in spite of his fear here. So first application comes from the big picture.

What's this message God is sending to Israel? Second one takes a little closer look at Gideon and what did he do here. And I think there's a lot for us to learn. Following Christ is always going to set us at odds with the world.

And we need to be willing to count the cost of discipleship. Trusting that Jesus is better than anything we might experience in this life. He's better.

[44 : 12] He said as much. I love the parables that he said when he talked about the gospel of the kingdom being like the man who stumbled upon the treasure in the field. You remember the parable Jesus told?

Is it Luke 15? Something like that. And he says that this man he stumbles over this treasure in the field and what he does he he sees such tremendous value in this treasure that he goes and he sells everything that he has.

All of it. In order that he could buy that field so that he could have that treasure. That's a picture of repentance isn't it? I don't need this life. I don't need all the things that I'm longing for and aching for now.

I don't need those things. All those things can be realized in Christ. And then he says that he gives us a second one. If we didn't get that one he gives us a second picture and he says it's it's also like the merchant.

Who finds this pearl of just tremendous value incalculable value and he goes and he sells his whole business in order that he could have this one pearl of great price and Jesus Jesus says that's what the gospel is.

[45 : 12] That's what the kingdom is like. It's people who have decided that this life that I'm better than anything this life offers. That knowing me is better than the closeness that you long for with your family and your friends and your community.

That pleasing me is better than pleasing self. That what I offer is better than anything that this world can offer you. And what we find in Gideon here is an example of that kind of faithfulness.

That the weak certainly not perfect still says I belong to God and I'm going to trust God and I'm going to obey God even when it costs me everything.

A stand for Christ might create a new group of enemies in your life. It probably will. But God might also use it to work on the heart of a Joe Ash in your home or a Joe Ash in your community.

And how exciting is it to think that God would use us in that way.