

The Calling Of A Cynic

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] Well, spending very much time at all reading through the stories of the Bible, it doesn't take long, does it, to develop a certain affinity for particular individuals that we read about.

All of us probably have people that we would say, well, this is my favorite person to read about in the Bible, or this is the person that I love the most. And there's many people that we read about in the Scriptures, our love for them, our concern for them is really rooted in the fact that they are such great examples to us.

None of them are perfect examples, but we look up to some of them, right, as spiritual examples. We see David against Goliath, and we want to be that courageous for God, right?

We see Paul and his efforts in serving the Lord in so many missions endeavors and the way that he sacrificed even his own health and body for the good of the Lord and the good of his kingdom.

And we think that's such a wonderful example of how I would love to live my life, and we love those characters because of that. We're not enamored with them so much because we relate to them, but because we want to.

[1 : 08] We hope to. We want to be like them. They feel much like biblical mentors to us in our Christian walk. But they often feel a lot like ideals to pursue more than peers that are walking alongside of us, don't they?

Then there's a different kind of person that we love as we read through the Scriptures, and it's not so much that we look up to them because there's not always a lot to look up to. A lot of times it's because we find them immediately relatable in their various weaknesses and failures.

And I find that one of the most relatable individuals in all the Bible is this man, Gideon, who's at the heart of this section of Judges. Gideon was a cynic who was consumed with fear and lived in constant need of reassurance from God.

His life was a spiritual rollercoaster even. He has moments, as we read through these next few chapters, he has moments of incredible faith and of strong leadership that is exemplary.

And then there's also times of great spiritual dearth in his life. Times where he commits sin that devastates his family.

[2 : 26] And not only his family, but the nation as a whole as they look to him as a leader of sorts during this time after he defeats Midian. He's just up and down as far as his spiritual life is concerned and his obedience and faithfulness to God is concerned.

He's not typically a person that comes to mind when we're trying to rank the people of greatest faith in the Bible. Yet he still makes it into that great chapter of faith in Hebrews chapter 11.

But he's not really the one that immediately comes to our mind, is he? That makes his life a helpful reminder, I think, to us that it's not the strength of our faith that ultimately matters.

It's the object of our faith, isn't it? I don't know if you ever go through life and you sit in church and where you look at these people that you follow on YouTube or Facebook or whatever.

And you just think, man, these people are just like, they're so much better Christians than me. I can never be like that. And then you start to mess with your mind a little bit and you think, you know, maybe I just don't have it.

[3 : 29] Maybe the love of the Father isn't in me because I'm not like this other person here. I don't think like that. I haven't grasped things like this other person. And it beats us down. We beat ourselves down in that.

And sometimes we need somebody like Gideon to come along the way and say, and just remind us, you know, this is not about if you have more faith than another person. It's not about what you do. It's not about the strength of your faith.

It's about the object of that faith that brings us through. And, of course, that matters when the object is the Lord himself. I love Gideon because I am Gideon.

I very much like him. And in the end, Gideon's story reveals to me God's incredible, indescribable, incomprehensible grace.

That seems to be a theme through our service this morning, doesn't it? I didn't intend for it to be that way. A lot of churches are, today is Reformation Day, right? As Tuesday marks the anniversary of Luther nailing his 95 theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg 500 years ago or so.

[4 : 37] And a lot of people are celebrating that, which puts a huge emphasis on grace. To be honest with you, every Sunday at Lakeside Bible Church is Reformation Sunday. Every Sunday is a Sunday that's focused on grace and on the grace of God.

And I find that in Gideon's story, that's really what begins to come to the surface, as it does with all of the other judges. We see tremendous grace and patience and love and mercy from God, which encourages me.

Because on the days when I'm most like Gideon in his failures and in his weaknesses, I can look to a passage like this and be reminded of the great, marvelous grace of our Lord.

Lord willing, we're going to spend the next few weeks looking through these chapters that cover the Gideon cycle in Judges. And what we want to do is keep one eye on the big picture, and that is what God is doing in and through the nation of Israel.

So we don't want to forget that. We don't want to lose the big picture. We don't want to lose the forest for the trees, okay? But we're going to keep the other eye on the trees, too, right? The other eye is going to be set on the finer details of how God is working through his servant, through Gideon.

[5 : 42] So we want to see God working on the big scale through Israel, and then we want to also be mindful of how God is working through this man, Gideon. And today we're going to consider God's call of Gideon, seeing both his design in it for Israel and then also his grace toward this man and other cynics like him, okay?

First thing I'd like for you to see is a message from God. A message from God. Look at verse 11 with me again. The angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Ebiah's right, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

So the story opens with Gideon struggling under the oppression of Midianite, these Midianite marauders, which we studied about last Sunday.

Just as a reminder, for seven years, God allowed this coalition of semi-nomadic tribes led by the tribes related to Midian.

They would invade the land of Israel every year. They would invade its territory. They were stealing all of its harvest. They were stealing all of its livestock. They were laying waste to the land as they came in, so there would be nothing to recover from thereafter.

[7 : 02] They were quite literally stealing food from the mouths of the Israelites, and many of them were having to go and live and retreat to these mountain caves until it was safe enough for them to come back to their homes, perhaps specifically in the region around the Jezreel Valley.

And we're introduced to Gideon here through the eyes of this messenger of God, this angel of God who looked on as Gideon tried to hide a portion of his family's harvest.

He's beating out the wheat, but he's not doing it on the threshing floor. Typically, this would be done on an elevated place, somewhere where there's lots of wind, and they could easily divide the chaff from the grain and so on and so forth.

Gideon isn't doing it there. Did you notice where he's actually beating out the grain? He's doing it in the confines of the wine press. Why? It tells us. He's trying to hide it from the Midianites.

See, it opens here with this in view. Gideon, this man who has suffered for seven years now, whose family has suffered for seven years.

[8 : 12] We get this picture of a frustrated, beleaguered individual doing everything he can just to survive. That's his situation. Look at verses 12 and 13 now.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him. After watching him a little while, perhaps he came down to where the wine press was. I don't know. And he says, The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor. Now, that's an unexpected title.

Because this mighty man of valor wasn't very mighty when he's hiding in the wine press, beating out the grain. Interesting, isn't it? Verse 13. And Gideon said to him, Please, my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

Where's all of his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord has forsaken us, given us into the hand of Midian.

It's a real Debbie Downer here, isn't he? We learned in our previous study last Sunday that when we look at God's discipline through the lens of Scripture and with a heart of faith, it moves us from despising the discipline of the Lord to rejoicing in it.

[9 : 25] And then Hebrews chapter 12 cautions us about this. And it notes for us that an alternative perspective of our trials and the things that God allows us to endure this life, even as it relates to his corrective discipline, that an alternative perspective than a heart of faith actually hardens our hearts further.

And what it produces in us is bitterness rather than growth. Let me just read this verse to you. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 15.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no, quote, root of bitterness springs up and calls us trouble, and by it many become defiled.

You can go back and study that passage this afternoon. This is set in the context of the discipline of God, the chastising hand of God for his people. And the bitter root that the writer refers to, it alludes to a passage in Deuteronomy, which describes someone who turns away from God and then spreads their rejection quickly like poison to others.

That's the picture in Deuteronomy 29. And the writer of Hebrews, he's playing on that, and he says if we have a different perspective of the difficulties of our lives, if we have a perspective that's not filled with faith, it's going to produce this poisonous root.

[10 : 47] We're going to become embittered toward God, and then we're going to spread that poisonous bitterness toward the other people in our lives. In other words, what he intends to say is that misinterpreting God's discipline can lead to a deadly, contagious form of apostasy, something that we might call spiritual cynicism.

And I think we find a bit of this here with our friend Gideon. Gideon acknowledges here the angel of the Lord, says the Lord is with you, and what is it that he immediately says?

Yes, yes, this is, it's all the Lord's fault. He acknowledges, the Lord has given us into the hand of Midian. But how can you possibly say that the Lord is with us?

That's his response. Instead of listening to the message of the prophet from verses 8, 9, and 10 in this same chapter, Gideon becomes a cynic who denies God's goodness, denies God's love.

God's messenger proclaimed that God was with Gideon and hinted even at Gideon's future as a mighty warrior for God's people, but Gideon responds cynically.

[12 : 14] He makes a complaint against the Lord instead. Yeah, if the Lord's with us, where is he now? I've listened to my parents and my grandparents talk all about the wonderful deeds of the Lord, but where is God when I need him?

He seemed to have been there for mom and dad. Where is he now? If the Lord was with us, we wouldn't be in this mess. So I don't know who you are, but I can say for sure, the Lord is not with us.

The Lord has forsaken us. Does that complaint sound very familiar to you? You ever read your Bible or listen to somebody give testimony about the goodness of God and all you can do is just kind of roll your eyes because you think, you know, it's really wonderful that they think that there's these good things happening in their life and that God's responsible, but where's God when I need him?

You know, if the Lord was really with us as we've been singing all morning, I wouldn't be in this terrible mess that I'm in. We develop this hardened cynicism, just like Gideon.

And fortunately for Gideon and for us, the messenger of God presses on. Look at verse 14. And the Lord turned to him and said, go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian.

[13 : 46] Do not I sin to you? And he said to him, please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I'm the least in my father's house.

We see this often in the scriptures too, don't we? Through his messenger, God declares that he was raising Gideon up and that he was going to empower him to fight against Midian, but Gideon misses the whole point here.

The emphasis of God's message through the angel of God was that he was sending Gideon with his power. That's the emphasis of what this messenger is saying.

The might of yours that he says here in verse 14, that's not something significant about Gideon. That's not something significant about his strength or about his accolades as a warrior.

That has nothing to do with Gideon. It was a promise of empowerment from God himself. Go, Gideon. Do not I sin to you, Gideon.

[14 : 52] But Gideon completely misses the point. In an episode that's reminiscent of Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush, Gideon judges this message from the messenger of God on the basis, not of God's strength, but on the basis of his own weakness.

Notice how he responds. He says, what are you talking about? My family, we're the lowest on the totem pole when it comes to the tribe of Manasseh. And guess what?

Manasseh's not really glowing as far as the 12 tribes are concerned. And even among my family, I'm the least. I'm the runt. What do you mean I'm going to be the one to do something with Midian?

You see, his cynicism robbed him of an ability to comprehend the weight of God's message. But still, the greatest promise is still yet to come. Look at verse 16.

Here's how the Lord responds. He's so patient, isn't he? And the Lord said to him, but I will be with you and you shall strike the Midianites as if they are just one man.

[16 : 01] One of God's most important and most prevalent promises in all the scriptures is this phrase, I will be with you.

I'll be with you, Gideon. The promise of God's presence and his power is sufficient to overcome all of our weaknesses.

It's sufficient to overcome all of our failures, all of our sinfulness. There's a lot of people who foolishly put faith in themselves. They would have been the ones who, when this messenger comes, says, well, of course I'm going to be the one to defeat Midian, right?

Put a lot of pride in themselves. But a cynic doesn't put faith in anything, including himself. He says, no.

Nobody's going to beat Midian. You know why? Because the Lord's not actually with us. That's Gideon's perspective here. That's his position. And here's the thing. Whether your problem is pride or cynicism or something else, God calls us to trust in him alone.

[17 : 08] It remains the same. What's God saying to Gideon? Trust me. I will be with you. Dale Ralph Davis has this great paragraph in his commentary on this passage.

He says, basically, God has nothing else or more to offer you in relation to this phrase, I will be with you. You can go through a lot with that promise, he says. It doesn't answer your questions about details.

It only provides the essential. Nothing about when or where or how or why. Only the what or better, the who. But I will be with you and that is enough.

This is part and parcel of the gospel message, isn't it? Mere religion relies on man's strength to deal with the problem of sin and death in our lives.

agnostic cynicism says that there's no possible way to ultimately deal with sin and death in our lives. There's no way to fix it.

[18 : 16] We're just doomed. But the Christian gospel looks at the person and the work of Jesus Christ who's already defeated sin and death on our behalf.

And it's through Jesus that God says to us, I will be with you. I will do what you will never be able to do for yourself. Trust in me alone.

Gideon, trust in me alone. Christian, trust in me alone. Cynic, trust me. It's a message from God.

Number two, we see a sign from God. Sign from God. Look with me at verse 17. Gideon warms up a little bit and he says to him, if now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you. And the angel of God said, I will stay till you return.

[19 : 21] So the message from God had officially grabbed Gideon's attention, right? But his fear and his skepticism again, would not allow him to trust God's word apart from some supernatural sign.

And all through this story and into chapter seven and chapter eight, we're going to see that Gideon is in constant need of reassurance from God. Always asking for a sign to confirm God's promise.

Hardened by his circumstances perhaps, filled with fear, Gideon lacks the faith to simply take God at his word. What is it about us that demands that God put his money where his mouth is, so to speak, every time he gives us a promise?

It's like we can't trust him unless there's always some new sign, always some new writing in the sky, some new revelation, temptation, or he's not trustworthy anymore.

Has God not done enough to prove himself? Has he not done enough for you? Has he not given us enough reason in his word to trust him?

[20 : 41] He's got a 100% success rate on delivering on his promises, yet we still find it so hard to just simply rest in those promises.

Now I think Gideon is demanding a sign here in part out of fear. I think it's a weakness of fear, it's a lack of faith, I think his cynicism is playing a role in this as well, and sometimes that's what we do.

We sense maybe through the preaching of the word or reading of the Bible, we sense that there's something in our lives that God is dealing with and God wants to do or God is convicting us of, and we're demanding that God do something else to confirm what he's actually telling us in his word, and that's coming out of a heart of fear.

We're afraid to look foolish perhaps, we're afraid that maybe we just haven't figured it out just right, or we're just filled with sin, maybe whatever it is. Sometimes that's why we demand these signs, and we want something that's unique and personal to us, but other times we demand a sign because of this innate cynicism that I think is evident in Gideon here as well.

A cynic demands a sign, 100% indisputable evidence of God's existence and God's goodness and God's trustworthiness, and the reason they demand such a sign is because they don't think such evidence is actually possible.

[22 : 09] This is the heart of a cynic, right? You see what the word says? That doesn't matter. They hear the testimony of others, that doesn't matter. Only what matters is that they can make their demand on God and say, God, I will only follow you and obey you and believe you if you do this and this and this and this, and they make it so impossible, of course, nothing's impossible for God, but they make it so impossible because they don't actually think that God's ever going to answer that.

They don't actually think that any of that evidence is actually possible for them. So what they're doing is they're making a demand for a sign in order that they may defend their cynicism because at the end of it, they can say, look, we prayed and we asked for God to do all these things and look, he hasn't done any of it.

In fact, our lives are worse. I was right. Here's what the cynic does, right? We demand size. We want this thing. Last night, I went to bed thinking about this last night, but there were these two teenagers that came up to the popcorn table at the event we were working at last night.

They were 13 years old. One of them was a Muslim and the other girl, she's 13 years old. And as we're chatting just briefly at the popcorn table, she tells me that she's not religious at all.

She's not interested in any kind of religion. And so I gently pressed on that just because I was curious. How does a 13 year old just decide that they don't want any kind of religion at all?

[23 : 39] And we had just a brief conversation and at some point I said something along the lines of, what I would encourage you to think about is that there must be some kind of truth out there.

There must be something. Even if you disagree with what I believe, there must be something. And she looks back and she doesn't try to defend that.

She looks back and she just says, no, no, no. That's all she would say. she has so hardened her heart, even as a 13 year old girl.

It's not that she denies that there is truth there. She just doesn't want to believe it even if she sees it. It's that cynical heart, isn't it?

Gideon is getting there. I think there's some different things going on with Gideon too, but some of us maybe are there in a position like that. You're making these demands for God because you don't think God's actually going to do it. He might not.

[24 : 37] But the issue isn't with what God's willing to do. The issue is with your hardened heart. But God's so very patient with us. Notice how long-suffering he is with Gideon's demands.

Look at verse 19. So Gideon went into his house and he prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. That's a lot of flour. That's 22 liters worth of flour. This is a massive cake.

The meat he put in a basket and the broth he put in a pot and he brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. The angel of God said to him take the meat and the unleavened cakes and put them on this rock and pour the broth over them and he did so.

Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

I don't know what Gideon was expecting. Certainly it wasn't something like this, right? He runs into his house. This would have taken time. This would have taken a lot of time. He runs into his house.

[25 : 39] He prepares this enormous meal, no doubt as we see in other places in the Old Testament. He presents it to the angel of God as an offering or a show of respect in order that he may get a sign from him as payment in regard for this show of respect, right?

And he brings out all of this unleavened bread and he takes care of the goat and he prepares the goat and he sets it out there and he brings the broth and then the angel of God doesn't treat it like a meal. That's what's strange, isn't it?

He treats it like an offering and he begins to instruct Gideon on what to do and he says, take the stuff and the broth and pour it over the other stuff and put it on this rock and Gideon does all this stuff.

So he instructs Gideon on what to do and then he takes the tip of his staff and he touches the meat and suddenly fire burst out, not from his staff, from the rock.

It just bursts into flames. It consumes all the meat and all the bread. Gideon, no doubt in astonishment at that moment, looks up and suddenly the angel of God has vanished.

[26 : 39] He's nowhere to be seen now. He's completely gone. There's your sign, Gideon. I don't know what you were looking for, but here it is and I think it begins to soften Gideon's heart, doesn't it?

God was very patient to do this for Gideon. I don't think we should take that to mean that he will always do that for us. Sometimes that's what we expect, right? We go to a passage like this and we say, well, if God did all that for Gideon, then surely he'll do it for me.

So we just encourage ourselves in the demands that we give to God and the truth is God's probably not going to do any of that for you. You know why? Because he's already done enough for you. The sign we have now is the sign of the Spirit that comes and transforms our lives.

God calls us to trust him, not test him. And that's something we need to learn. In his kindness, he does often answer even our most faithless prayers.

But his desire is that we trust his word, relying even on how he has proven himself to others that we read about, even Gideon. Number three, we see the peace of God.

[27 : 52] So we've seen a message from God, we've seen a sign from God. Now we see the peace of God. Now we have to be careful, let me just preface what I'm about to say with this. We have to be careful not to read new covenant realities into an old covenant narrative.

That can be a very dangerous thing to do and you don't want to do that. But if we were to use gospel language to describe this scene, I think this would be akin to what we would say would be Gideon's moment of conversion.

Or at least it gives us a significant parallel to what conversion looks like for us who are under the gospel of grace and in the New Testament time.

And I want you to keep that in mind. Look at verse 22. Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.

This is a markedly different response than we saw before. Alas is an expression of grief and concern. Gideon gets his sign but he's not excited afterwards.

[29 : 05] He's terrified afterwards. Having realized that he had been in the presence of this angel from God, Gideon was now afraid for his life.

But his fear wasn't of Midian this time. Now his fear is of God. I have stood face to face with God through his messenger. Gideon's saying, and he expects now to die as a result.

How foolish, says Barry Webb. How foolish all his anger seems now. And how dangerous. If only he could retract his outburst about everything being God's fault.

But it's too late for that now. All he can do is blurt out his fear like a condemned man. I love this statement from Dale Ralph Davis as well.

There is nothing amazing about grace. As long as there's nothing fearful about holiness. What is it that's happening with Gideon here?

[30 : 14] The holiness of God is a terrifying reality for those whose eyes are open to it. That's what's happening with Gideon. The Lord has been gracious to actually open his eyes to the Lord's holiness.

And when our eyes are open to God's holiness, an encounter with God, it does not initially bring feelings of hope. It brings feelings of despair. because when we encounter the holiness of God, when we're awakened to it, it simultaneously causes us to come to grips with our own unholiness.

And when this moment comes, all we're left doing is crying out for mercy. Alas, O Lord God, have mercy on me, O Lord God.

He has no other cry to make. How foolish and dangerous our faithless cynicism seems when we finally have a genuine encounter with God.

The God we have thus far denied or rejected or being embittered toward. But it's through this despair that we can hear the voice of God speak his peace.

[31 : 32] Look at verse 23. But the Lord said to him, Peace be to you. Shalom, Gideon. Do not fear. You shall not die. Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it Yahweh is peace.

To this day it stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. Now why does Gideon call the place Yahweh is peace or the Lord is peace? It wasn't merely about the announcement of peace.

It was the experience of that peace. Because of his earlier statements, Gideon trembled at the realization of encountering God through his messenger.

He viewed himself as worthy of death before the face of God. But it was a declaration of peace from God that he heard, not a declaration of condemnation.

Isn't that amazing? Peace be to you, Gideon. Do not fear. You're not going to die. I'm not going to kill you. Gideon experienced God's grace.

[32 : 43] And then it produced in him a very genuine, perhaps for the first time in his life, a genuine moment of worship. Now isn't this how the movements of the gospel work in our lives?

We have an encounter with the holiness of God, which produces fear. We see his holiness. We see our sinfulness. All we're left to do now is to cry out for mercy.

And then that moves us to this experience of peace. God speaks peace through the gospel. And then what happens immediately after? We're driven to genuine worship.

True worship. worship. Now some of you have been trying really hard to worship. But you can't help but get the sense that something just isn't right.

You're doing your best to sing the songs and to pray the prayers and to follow the readings and to understand the sermons and to hear the word. But deep down at the end of the service, every Sunday, Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, you know that you have not had a genuine worship.

[33 : 56] You have not truly worshiped and you know it. It's like you're pulling on the rope if you go to the old churches with the church bells, right?

But you know what I mean? You send the kid or whoever it is and they go and they ring the bell and that's what your worship feels like Sunday by Sunday. You're running to the rope and you're singing all the songs and praying the prayers and you're listening and you're taking the notes, you're doing all this stuff and you're pulling the rope and nothing's happening.

There's no bell donging up there. It's just quiet in your heart. It feels forced. In fact, it's not even really all that interesting to you.

You're just doing whatever you can to get through it and you're pulling on that rope and nothing's happening. And maybe it's time for you to consider whether or not your rope is even attached to the bell. You cannot truly worship in spirit and truth as Jesus said in John chapter 4 until you have had a genuine experience of grace.

An authentic moment of knowing the peace of God after realizing what you deserve is the wrath of God. That's the only thing that can move you to true worship but it's only through the gospel of Jesus that you can actually experience that grace.

[35 : 16] We sing about it all the time. Christ our hope in life and death. What truth can calm the troubled soul? God is good. God is good. Where is his grace and goodness known?

Not in the goat and the unleavened bread and the broth that suddenly is consumed by fire that shoots out of a rock. That's not where his grace and goodness will ever be known for you. His grace and goodness is known in our great Redeemer's blood.

Our sins as Gideon knew well makes us God's enemies. It sets us on the path destined for God's eternal wrath but in love God sends his sinless son to take his wrath in our place.

On the cross Christ suffers Christ suffers as an atoning sacrifice for our sins so that through him we can now truly have peace with God.

It is through the cross of Jesus that God says to us peace be to you. Peace be to you. Not because of you and not because of some sign but because of Jesus who took your place peace be to you.

[36 : 37] This is what Paul was on about in Colossians chapter one. God was pleased through Christ to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of his cross.

And then he graciously invites us into this peace through simple faith in what Jesus has done. You know what the cross says?

It says I will be with you. Trust me. It's God's promise. You know how it is received? Simply by believing it.

That's Romans 5. Therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There will continue to be remnants of Gideon's sin and fear throughout the remaining chapters but the importance of his call here cannot be overstated. Through it we find these glimpses, these gospel glimpses that is fulfilled in Christ.

[37 : 53] We see again and again the wonder of God's mercy and love towards sinners. we find in Gideon's call that God can transform the most embittered cynic.

I don't know all of you. I don't know exactly what has happened in your life or why you're angry with God if you are angry with God or whatever it may be. What I do know is that God's peace, God's peace can even change your heart.

He can transform your heart. He can give you a new heart action. He won't answer all your questions. He never promised to do that. And he's not going to make everything in your life better.

That's a false gospel. That's not what he does. He didn't make everything in Gideon's life better. In fact, things are going to get real hard for Gideon real fast. But what he says is I will be with you and if you will trust me, you will have my peace and you can trust him.

Alistair Begg said one time I was in a service that was on, the context of it was on suffering and he said when you cannot sense his presence, you can always trust his word.

[39 : 08] And maybe you're here and you just need to repeat that to yourself a few times. I don't feel God's presence in my life right now. I don't feel that he is with me. The messenger on Sunday morning preaching Judges 6 said that the Lord is with me.

I don't feel that today. But what you need to do is not take my word for it. You need to trust his word for it. You may not sense his presence but you can trust his word. The other thing that this teaches us is that God's power can use the weakest and most fearful of us as his instruments of grace.

That doesn't get any better for Gideon and it's almost comical to see how many times he keeps coming back to God with this just deep need for reassurance. I'll save it for those studies to explore it and laugh at it but it's just amazing how truly weak Gideon actually is.

We think of him as this mighty warrior. It's really not what he was. He was weak. He was like us. Weak. Cynical. Constantly in need of reassurance.

And look at the way that God used his life as an instrument of grace. So all praise to him. Amen.